

# THE CARLETON Miscellany

## SCIENCE, THE STATE & THE COUNTRY OF THE SELF

- "THINKING & UNTHINKING ABOUT THE BOMB," by Melvin Seiden
- "CONFESSIONS" by Paul Petrie, Thomas Merton, Robert Lowry
- "MY C MINUS IN BIOLOGY," by Reed Whittemore
- "EBENEZER AND HIS FIRST MANNED ROCKET"—The Quarter's Epic

## SINKING AS AN ART, IN & OUT OF ENGLISH DEPTS.

- "ICARUS," by Jacob Zilber
- NEW TEXTBOOK FINDS by Wayne Booth & Walker Gibson
- "THE PASSIONATE BREAD-LOAFER'S FAREWELL," & Other Matters

DEBORAH AUSTIN  
HAYDEN CARRUTH  
H. E. F. DONOHUE  
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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Among the 10 previous contributors to *The Miscellany* in this issue, IRVING FELDMAN reports a new book of poems coming out in the spring of '61, *Works and Days, and Other Poems* (Atlantic-Little, Brown).

The "Confession" by THOMAS MERTON which appears in this issue is part of a new book by him being published by New Directions in November, *The Behavior of Titans*.

ROBERT LOWRY, of Bleecker Street, an old *Furioso* contributor, has published many stories and several novels, including *New York Call Girl*. Two more stories of his are scheduled for publication in *The Miscellany*.

PHILIP MURRAY, a former contributor to *Furioso*, teaches English at Hofstra College. His work has appeared recently in *Mutiny*, Columbia University *Forum* and *Poetry*.

H. E. F. DONOHUE "was laborer & riveter & reporter & edi-

tor & copy writer & bookstore owner (in Chicago where I went to the University after a year at William & Mary from home town of Trenton, N. J.). Am un-Anti-American — American finishing first novel after working on it for more than two years. Harper's has published two of my stories . . ."

GEORGE STARBUCK, author of the current volume in the Yale Series of Younger Poets, *Bone Thoughts*, works for Houghton Mifflin, Inc.

JOHN TAGLIABUE, back from two years in Japan, is teaching Humanities at Bates College this fall. His first collection of *Poems* (Harper's) is now in its second printing.

JACOB ZILBER teaches English at the University of British Columbia, is an editor of *Prism*.

PAUL PETRIE's work has appeared in *Poetry*, *The New Yorker*, and other magazines. He is an alumnus of Paul Engle's Iowa Workshop, and now lives in West Kingston, Rhode Island.

ALLEN J. KOPPENHAVER writes: "I suppose you could say that I'm a part-time instructor in Freshman English at Duke University which will explain well enough the reason for the poems."

ELVAN KINTNER teaches English at Carleton.

STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN teaches at Bennington. He has been a staff writer for *The New Yorker* and is the author of *The Armed Vision: A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism*.

LLOYD ZIMPEL lives in San Francisco. He graduated from the University of Minnesota, has written for *The New Republic*, *The Nation* and other magazines.

HISAYE YAMAMOTO, of Los Angeles, an old contributor to

*Furioso*, is now Mrs. Anthony DeSoto. Her report: "We live high on the hills of this city with a septic tank, a couple of peach trees, a fig tree, a grapevine; and my husband works hard at improving the property so that we can move one of these days to Monterey"

CONRAD HILBERRY is from DePauw University in Indiana.

DEBORAH AUSTIN's work has appeared in *The Yale Review* and *The Atlantic*. She teaches English at Penn State College.

## COMING IN THE WINTER ISSUE

"Themes and Methods; The Early Stories of Thomas Mann"—Howard Nemerov

"Flight Into Zen"—Peter Fingesten

"Ironology"—Wayne Booth

Stories and Poems by Irvin Faust, Robert Lowry, Ramon Guthrie, Donald Hall, Barriss Mills, Donald Petersen, David Young, Andrew Oerke, Saul Touster, Pierre Delattre, Robert Lax, and others

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## CONTEST WINNERS

The editors of *The Carleton Miscellany* are pleased to announce the following winners of the *Miscellany's* fiction-and-essay contest for 1960:

Best Story — \$250 to Melvin Seiden, for "A Shaggy-Dog Story" in the Spring Issue.

Best Essay — \$250 to Scott Bates, for "Three French Classics of Black Humor," in the Summer Issue.

We congratulate the winners, and we thank our many contributors who competed for the awards. Naturally we very much like both the above pieces, but the selection was nonetheless a difficult one, especially in the case of the essay. We ask Mr. Bates not to be incensed by this confession. He is one of our favorite contributors, and we have some more of his fables coming up in our next issue. Furthermore, his prize essay was, we thought, wholly commendable. Our doubts therefore were merely technical; we were not sure his essay was an essay, since its prime object was the presentation of three poems translated (by Mr. Bates) from the French.

We consulted our authorities and our consciences and decided that a certain clause in Rule One of the contest gave us our case:

... the judges may decide in each instance whether the story submitted is a story, the essay an essay.

Therefore: our thanks to Rule One, and to Mel Seiden and Scott Bates.



## **SCIENCE, THE STATE & THE COUNTRY OF THE SELF**

### **THINKING AND UNTHINKING ABOUT THE BOMB**

*By* MELVIN SEIDEN

The most extraordinary single fact about The Bomb as a kind of idiot presence, locked up in the American attic and occasionally given a harmless public airing, is how well we have learned to live with it. Apparently.

Who in 1945 could have imagined that in a decade or so we would be taking it for granted as a fact of international life, accepting it the way rain or drought or blizzards are made the best of? In 1945 a prognosticator steeped in political, military, and cultural history ought to have predicted that immanent in The Bomb were the seeds of revolutionary change infinitely more potent than the old textbook examples of the wheel, the steam engine, or Henry Ford's Dearborn baby. He might have

compared The Bomb—referring not merely to its capacity to wreak havoc—to that favorite of the evolutionists, the prehensile thumb. The tone and texture of American life ought to have been transformed dramatically by our possession of The Bomb; by our being able, whether we used the power or not, to press a button and usher in Yeats's fabulous darkness. (For the ambiguous but definitely non-royal "we" of the previous sentence read "they" and for "they" read "the powers that be" and for this convenient phrase, fill in names, movements, ideas, etc. of your own choice.)

Of course there have been many profound changes in American life since Hiroshima, but how these changes are related to our living with the gothic horror that was brought to birth in the converted bleachers of the athletic field of the University of Chicago is far from clear.

Consider for a moment the simple and obviously relevant question of nervousness—specifically, national jitters. A contagious physical disease, a mentally unbalanced member of a family, a truckload of nitro-glycerine—these we can all understand as threatening our peace of mind. In the presence of such threats we begin to sweat. Simple-mindedly then we analogize from these to The Bomb, assuming, quite naturally, that since Its destructive potentiality is astronomically greater than any other imaginable threat, no one in the world (let alone in America) ought to be able to bring his morning cup of coffee to his lips without losing half of it on the way up because of the shakes. It's a reasonable hypothesis; but one doesn't have to invoke that mystical abstraction, The National Temper, to show that it is wrong. Search, dear reader, your own heart or the pulse of kin, kind, or colleague and see if you can find anyone who suffers from a genuinely unnerving bomb-angst. Norman Cousins, Albert Schweitzer, Professors Harrison Brown, Linus Pauling, and C. Wright Mills all worry about The Bomb, to be sure. But it is a special kind of unagitated worrying, a deliberate and self-consciously earnest Concern whose temperature remains the same whether it contemplates The Bomb, the fate of the Ameri-



can novel, or our water resources. (Detergents are also a threat.) Only religious nuts, their brains addled by God and the Arizona sun, scurry off into sealed bomb-shelters to await the day of wrath in fear and trembling.

This chiliastic Arizona madness is the sort of thing one might have expected to happen more often and to more of us. In fact, those of us who worry because we do not seem to have either the inclination or capacity to really worry might find it paradoxically comforting to see more of such demonstrations of bomb-jitters. Reading in the newspapers about these pious men and women holed up in their desert bunkers to await A-Day (the Apocalypse), I have found myself thinking about New York's governor and Richard Nixon's new friend, Nelson Rockefeller. There he was a year ago gliding gracefully over the political waters, for all the world like a Wagnerian swan. His proposal that a compulsory bomb-shelter program be instituted in New York must have made him seem both to political friends and enemies a cracked goose. When in recent political history has such high-minded, humanitarian concern for national survival been greeted with greater indifference and contempt? The budgeteers on the right disliked Governor Rockefeller's plan because it smelled of state-spending and \$'s down the drain and the liberals laughed at it as another vain prescription for handling the raging nuclear disease with aspirin and argyrol. Everyone except Governor Rockefeller seemed to think that his plan was madness, and the embarrassing egg was discreetly buried and forgotten. Has some latter-day Mencken thought of asking the Governor to comment on the survival tactics of those religious folk out in the west who went underground to wait for the end? The Governor's observations would be interesting.

The fifties has been a decade in which, among other developments, the neuro-surgical device called the frontal lobotomy was perfected and popularized. As this layman understands it, the lobotomy is a surgical method whereby an area of the troubled patient's consciousness is simply removed—expunged. It is, as it were, cure by deletion rather than by the traditional psy-

chiatric means of addition—of psychic strength, insight, or whatever it is that must be given to the mentally ill person to permit him to function more effectively and happily. The lobotomized patient, one is told, is, if not happy, not unhappy either; and that is because his brain has been reduced, simplified, made vegetable.

We live with The Bomb the way the lobotomized live with their personal problems. This is the principle that explains how it is that we have learned to live with The Bomb in such indecent comfort.

A paradoxalist might make a case for laying the blame for this lobotomized response to The Presence upon the religious, moral, and humanist tradition of our civilization: the argument being that the voices of this tradition have cried wolf so often in warning against sins ranging from adultery (A) to xenophobia (X) that, even if we wanted to take seriously the cries of alarm raised by those who suffer Bomb-insomnia, we can no longer muster the moral passion, having exhausted it upon a thousand other issues. The trouble with this argument is that it assumes that most of us see The Bomb as what it is in fact: a man-made contrivance which can be used, abused, or left unused. If however we have lost sight of this simple fact and when, infrequently, we consider The Bomb we think of it instead as a kind of natural phenomenon, here to stay forever, brought into existence because it *had* to be, and thus, like the weather, something that makes up its own rules despite our efforts to propose strategies and solutions for its control—if, then, The Bomb seems like a brute natural force, our attitudes toward moral questions are not going to have much influence upon how we react to this freak of nature.

What I am trying to get at here Keats expressed perfectly in the "Grecian Urn" Ode: "Thou, silent form," he lamented (strangely excited though by his philosophical pessimism), "dost tease us out of thought/ As doth eternity." Such things as Eternity, Infinity, Determinism (and more about this last one later) at first seem to invite thought. Then they defeat it utterly. In thinking about Eternity thought thinks itself into un-thought. It



always happens this way. The same maddening process has afflicted me when, trying to be a Responsible Citizen, I have tried to contemplate The Bomb. I must assume then—if only on the basis of my own solitary experience—that this disconcerting mechanism of thinking oneself out of thought is the explanation of the lobotomized un-reaction to The Bomb.

What is eternity? Not even the poets have been able to tell us. But the logical mind can formulate with no great difficulty all of the things it is not. In the same way, one can note the many things about The Bomb that are, as we keep saying and hearing said in print, unthinkable.

It is unthinkable that We or They will use it; that we would dare to live as a nation without it; that the world can survive with it; that it would not have been someday discovered even if Harry Truman had said to the scientists, "O.K. boys, burn the papers, dismantle the labs, forget about the whole thing, and let's get back to guns and planes"; that the dread formula,  $E=MC^2$ , could be obliterated from the consciousness of mankind so that one day there would be a race of men who simply would not know how to make The Bomb . . . This is a tedious list. But one more item, the most not-to-be-thought-of unthinkable of them all, must be added. Do any of us really believe that the world can be destroyed right down to Thurber's last flower? All the reputable scientists tell us that it can indeed. Nevil Shute, Stanley Kramer, assisted by Tony Perkins, Fred Astaire, and Ava Gardner took us down "On the Beach" and told us—in Cinemascope and, with what was meant to be pathos, told us that it could happen; implied—and here I give Mr. Kramer and his co-workers the benefit of the doubt—that it would happen unless we did something (but what we were never told) about it. And though my wife would not permit me to go Galluping around the theatre lobby to authenticate my hunch, I am still convinced that no one in the upstate New York theatre in which I saw the movie believed in that movie for one minute. This willing retention of disbelief among those of the movie's viewers I have spo-

ken to is not due solely to the inadequacies of the film, considerable though these are.

I want to begin to edge closer to politics. By prejudice, conviction, background, and custom I am one of Dwight Macdonald's lib-labs, which is to say that my heart is in the highlands of the left, wherever my head may be from day to day and from issue to issue. Now what happens to me when I see Professor Teller on TV, listen to his arguments or read them in *Life*? In Professor Teller's debate with Bertrand Russell, Lord Russell was my man all the way. Intellectually, I'm all for cessation of testing, disarmament, peace talk, concessions—why not allow Red China to enter the UN and see what happens? Emotionally, however, I am a camp-follower of the Tellerites, but neither out of conviction nor prejudice. It is never what Teller says that makes me listen to him respectfully; it is what he does not say. For all I know his arguments, which minimize the dangers to mankind stressed by his opponents, are correct. Or perhaps they are fallacious, based on faulty or tendentiously manipulated statistics. It does not matter. All the while that Professor Teller is using his intellect to minimize the maximalists' nightmares (nightmares, I am still insisting, that are themselves intellectual fabrications, since none of the maximalists, so far as I know, has, for instance, refused to have any truck with further propagation or done anything else in a gesture of absolute despair)—all the while, the comforting voice of my pure unreasoning emotion keeps whispering, "But is it possible that God, Nature, Destiny, or Khrushchev will allow these ultimate disasters actually to take place?" A cynical faith (i.e., a stubborn lack or at least a balking of the imagination) assures me that life will go on because, just as I cannot conceive of eternity, I cannot extract a meaning from the words, "the end of life," and even less am I able to contemplate the extinction of life brought about by man himself. Instead of Thurber's last flower, I conjure up a picture of a hideously malformed Jukes, circa 2160, the fag-end of countless generations of radioactivity-engendered mutants, crawling into his cave to die, barren in a barren world shrouded by the radio-

active miasma—"and not a soul to tell/ Why thou art desolate, can e'er return." I decide that Thurber did a lot better. My balked imagination has landed me in a suburb of Disneyland: It Can Happen Here Land (or: Child is Father to the Man Land.)

This recalcitrance of the imagination and this lobotomized coming to terms with The Bomb by ignoring it can, from a philosophical point of view, be seen as metaphysical determinism. Nowadays, the inevitable opening phrase for serious essays is: In the frighteningly complex world in which we live. . . . Precisely. Parents and educators wring their hands over the hopelessness of trying to reform our schools on the local level, let alone doing something—anything!—about The Bomb. The oldest and most popular image of American culture is that of a self-confident, energetic, untraditional people. "Know-how" means "Can-do" and, as an old popular song puts it: wishing can make it so. Only scoffers and reactionaries doubt that we can make the waters of the seas potable or send diplomatic teams to negotiate treaties with the Martians. At the same time that there is enormous optimism about what we can do with nuclear energy on the technological front, there is little hope, energy, or enthusiasm given to the problem of doing something *about* the military uses to which nuclear fission may be put.

Our ostrich-response to The Bomb looks like some sort of stoic and even fatalistic determinism. It has the appearance of what we Americans, in our more normal and typical volitionist impatience with the slothful ease of the what-will-be-will-be Weltanschauung, usually dismiss with contempt as decadence when we find it in others. Wasn't it Gertrude Stein who observed that America was the oldest country in the world, the point being that of the old epigram about an America that has passed from adolescence to senility without having gone through maturity? It is all quite alarming. C. Wright Mills, in an angry and very disturbing look, *The Causes of World War Three*, goes farther in his indictment. Not only The Bomb, but the next war, he insists, have been accepted as inevitable. Even the intellectuals have sold out to the bankrupt philosophy of "crackpot

realism"—i.e., the idea that a cold war is at once better than and a deterrent to a hot and must therefore be made the best of.\*

The purpose of Professor Mills' book is to free us from the moral and practical immobility of this fatalistic shoulder-shrugging. Meaning to mobilize us (the intellectuals) for the battle to abolish the cold war and the paralyzing threat of The Bomb, he must induce in us—and he came close to succeeding with me—bomb jitters. But again, my heart and head are in conflict. Head-morality says: "You ought not be able to sleep for the hot presence of The Bomb in the cold war." The wisdom of the heart—if that is what it is—turns (to no one's surprise) Shakespearean and asks: That way madness lies—does it not?

An analogy suggests itself. Muscular, American-style voluntarism would have been fatally inappropriate in pre-Mao China. We recognize the fallacy of ethnocentrism in the impatience we used to feel toward what we called contemptuously Oriental passivity. Given the facts of life and death in the Orient—malnu-

---

\* Professor Mills' practical purpose—to head off the stampede toward war—is easier to state than are his arguments. However, a reasonably accurate statement of these arguments, put in something like syllogistic form, would go something like this:

"Since most of the causes of World War III are accepted as 'necessity'; to expect its coming is considered 'realism.' Politicians and journalists, intellectuals and generals, businessmen and preachers now fight this war—and busily create the historical situation in which it is viewed as inevitable . . . Among the led and among the leaders moral insensibility to violence is as evident as is the readiness to practice violence. The ethos of war is now pervasive . . . War is no longer an interruption of peace; in our time, peace itself has become an uneasy interlude between wars . . . (p. 2) . . . World War III . . . is being prepared and coldly fought in the name of the sovereign state by the power elites of the two superpowers, with the acquiescence of public and masses and the defaults of political men and intellectual workmen" (p. 81);

it now must be recognized that,

"The only realistic military view is the view that war, and not Russia, is now the enemy . . . (p. 97, *italics Mills'*) An attack on war-making is an attack on the U.S. power elite. An attack on this power elite is also a fight for the democratic means of history-making. A fight for such means is necessary to any serious fight for peace . . . Military personnel and the military mentality must be firmly subordinated to civilian and political men and purposes. Inside the U.S.A. we must become political again." (p. 121)

trition, poverty, disease, social and economic immobility, illiteracy, everything in short that the energetic Marxists propose to abolish along with the passive attitudes that sanction them—given what had seemed the hopelessness of the human condition in the Orient, struggle and resistance must have seemed futile. Fatalism was an appropriate response to what appeared to be the adamant obduracy of life itself.

The Communists are engaged in changing all this in China. Whatever else they may have accomplished or failed to accomplish they seem to have been successful in importing the Western philosophy of dynamicism. But have they simply convinced the Chinese millions to abandon their traditional attitude of quiescence? Or even coerced so profound a change? Neither seems probable. Ideational change is both the cause and the effect of changes in the total objective reality. You cannot have one without the other.

In America now, the objective reality so far as The Bomb is concerned seems to be one that is constituted of nothing but dead-ends, one unthinkable alternative opening on to another, and hopeless solutions revealing themselves for what they are in the very act of being expressed. Grim and fatalistic passivity seems the only sane attitude to take. And, just as we and the U.S.S.R. are stalemated, so our curious unthinking "thinking" about The Bomb cannot change until the realities themselves become more hopeful and, of course, these realities remain what they are only because our passivity makes us see them as hopeless.

Philosophical arguments aside, there is another and perhaps more compelling reason to retreat into mindless acceptance of The Bomb. I refer to the fact that its enormities seem to have defeated those who have tried to think about it politically. Presently I shall cast a jaundiced eye upon the optimistic theorizing of those who hold that The Bomb serves as a deterrent to war. If however a silver lining must be found in those black, sunswallowing, Himalayan mushrooms thrown up by The Bomb, it is in the fact that neither the ideologists of the right nor the left



have been able to win wide and deeply felt assent for their nostrums. Both sides argue with equal plausibility — and absurdity, while the mere existence of The Bomb confounds their arguments.

I say that this is a silver lining of sorts because all too often, as Matthew Arnold never tired of pointing out, political partisans carry the day by insisting on the practical importance of partisanship. But where The Bomb is concerned, disengagement seems the better part of political valor. Accepting The Bomb simply because it is, the American people also accept the fact that we build bigger and better bombs and stockpile them . . . in case. True. But is this also an acceptance of the idea that what we are doing is the right or the best policy? I doubt it. I doubt that most of us are persuaded of the superiority of our tough approach — Mills' "crackpot realism": build the big mushroom-makers and hope that, if it should come to a showdown, they will remain ornamental, never to mushroom, while we rely on old fashioned Lilliputian infantry and the other etcetras of "conventional" warfare. No, we accept our present bomb policies in apathy, just as, in apathy, we dismiss as folly demonstrations "against" The Bomb. Perhaps one of C. Wright Mills' reasons for calling the ideas of the tough-policy school "crackpot realism" was the polemicist hunch that his radical idealism was going to be called "crackpot unrealism." Well, The Bomb doth make crackpots of us all.

What literally every school boy knows about The Bomb — not much, to be sure — is enough to make one suspicious of the arguments that stress security and peace through strength and minimize the dangers of radioactive fallout and everything else that those on the left believe makes The Bomb potentially a master rather than the servant of its users. I say suspicious; I do not say that Henry Luce, Professor Teller, and the late Nye Bevan, who broke with the majority of the Labor Party on this issue of The Bomb, are wrong in advocating peace-through-deterrence. But since only all-out war can provide the conditions necessary for determining whether or not a controllable

war can be fought with The Bomb, one is bound to be suspicious of those who are confident that it can. Suppose no one is around to give Professor Teller the lie?

It is indeed possible that at first our monopoly on The Bomb and later Russia's presumptive equality in waging nuclear warfare have kept the peace. The Bomb is so fearfully destructive that neither side would dare to use it—so the argument goes. But even if this hypothesis is correct—and we have no way of knowing—there is no way of determining with any precision what the point of balance is, so that *we* at least can insure that we will have neither Too Much nor Too Little power.

There is a certain smugness inherent in the arguments of the Thank-God-for-The-Bomb school. (Given the opportunity, what might Einstein and Fermi want to say to Him about His Bomb?) I await the day when a representative of the deterrence-position stands up (or sits down, pen in hand) to praise Pontecorvo, Klaus Fuchs, and the Rosenbergs for having done a work of international good will in furnishing the Russians with the top-secret stuff that permitted them to achieve nuclear parity. Such principled praise would purge the deterrence advocate of the charge of intellectual arrogance and demonstrate to boot his deep belief in the arguments he espouses. For, if it is a balance of power that keeps the peace, we are wrong to construe Patriot and Traitor as we have been doing. Would it not be necessary, if America were far out front in the arms race, to help the Russians achieve nuclear equality? The deterrence crowd often sounds as if it had cornered the patriotism market. But a rigorously maintained politics of a balance of power is ultimately incompatible with nationalism and patriotism. It is frighteningly internationalist and I wish someone would tell that to Henry Luce.

It will of course be said—it *has* been said—that it is madness to talk about us being fair, reasonable, yielding, acting the ingenuous Dove (let alone helping the Russians to be as strong as we are), when we are dealing with a ruthless new-style imperialism that respects only superior strength. Only in a lovers' quarrel

can the Eagle and the Dove become paradoxically transmogrified "to one neutral thing." This is a convincing argument, but its implications yield no comfort to those who put their faith in deterrence through balance of power. We dare not allow ourselves to become weak lest this weakness encourage Russian aggression. E. B. White makes the melancholy observation that, "An arms race is a frightening thing, but eighty sovereign nations suddenly turning up without arms is truly terrifying." In the arms race we must, therefore, seek the equipoise of mini-max: neither Too Much nor Too Little. The rub, of course, is that in this game of mini-max we are playing under the assumption that the Russians also are guided in their military strategy by the principles of mini-max. We can safely assume that, like us, they will not allow themselves to become so weak as to invite our aggression. But how can we possibly assume that they will respect the other half of the principle which compels the player (the country) to *limit* its strength, because excessive strength is just as likely to panic the other country (player) into war (before its enemy's strength becomes absolutely insuperable) as having Too Little, it is assumed, invites the enemy's bullying? So: we are back to the Rosenbergs and Klaus Fuchs. Even in our nuclear heyday, no voices were heard from the deterrence-advocates suggesting that we limit our strength so that the Russians could catch up. And when such voices are heard in the Soviet Union I for one will be willing to exchange citizenship. If they will have me.

No, these poker strategies can only work in a poker game, where the players agree to and do in fact abide by the rules. In international relations, mini-max cannot work, and so-called balance of power is only Realpolitik, a rationale for the fear of Too Little, but never a check upon the insatiable hunger to have More which, from Our point of view and Theirs, is never Too Much.

But if the position of the right can be impaled on the horns of its own logic, the difficulties of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (to take a representative group on the left) are just



as great, though of a different order. The implications of the key word, "sane," seem at first clear enough. A nuclear arms race is "insane," and regardless of what specific programs (cessation of testing, disarmament, etc.) this Committee advocates, the ultimate purpose of its militant pacifism is of course the abolition of The Bomb. These idealists are asking that a revolutionary technological development be abandoned on moral grounds. The insanity of the arms race is seen as moral insanity, criminal irresponsibility to mankind and to those unborn generations now threatened by the genetic damage of radioactive fallout.

But this moral argument flies in the face of human experience and history. One cannot find any previous instances in which some new process, invention, mechanism or skill was abandoned by those who possessed it simply because it was judged to be morally evil. Whatever is or is thought to be useful is never cast on to the junkpile of history until something more useful has come along to replace it. And now, though the smaller countries in the world tend to be neutralist and their peoples far more sympathetic to the ideals represented by the Committee for a Sane N.P. than either the American or Russian people seem to be, some of these very nations are busy trying to beg, borrow, or perfect their own big bombs.

E. B. White, as we have seen, is frightened by the thought of the terrible vacuum that would be left by total nuclear disarmament. What he is really afraid of, of course, is a cynical, Machiavellian, pseudo-disarmament which, on Russia's part at any rate, he believes would be a devious and sophisticated ploy for achieving greater strength. But no one, surely, is going to view with alarm a total disarmament that means relegating The Bomb to the dust heap of obsolescence. This is a dream we have all had. On the left, however, this dream is taken seriously. It is sincerely believed that if mankind could be made to understand the immoral insanity inherent in the very possession of The Bomb it would arise to do something about it. What? Apparently, it is simply to be abolished.

So: we find ourselves back in a hopeless dilemma. E. B. White

insists that the causes of war must be abolished before the abolition of weapons can be a useful strategy. The idealists of the left, terrified of The Bomb and too impatient to wait for the Kantian millenium in which war itself will have been eliminated from international affairs, want to abolish the weapon which, though it does indeed make war more monstrous and insane than ever before, does not, they insist, lessen but in fact heightens the possibility of there being another war.

Now who, the reader must ask himself, has got more stars in his eyes? E. B. White, asking for only the impossible, the abolition of the causes of war? Or the C.S.N.P. man, expecting mankind, now that it has achieved what it has been hard at work perfecting throughout its history — the ultimate weapon — to abandon it simply because it will do what it was designed to do? These two utopias cancel one another out perfectly, and the fellow who's trying to make up his mind about what to think or do about The Bomb is bound to conclude that not-thinking and not-doing is safest.

The other day, while taking a walk with my eleven year old son, I found myself giving him a short course in my version of international relations. It is not often that I am given such pedagogical opportunities. We had been talking about less solemn matters: I recall his asking me how many minutes I could swim under water. "Minutes!" I cried out from the depths of my nicotine'd o'er lungs. Then, later on in our rambling talk, he wanted to know if and how the Russians could wipe us out and how long it would take them to do so. I said, but with the kind of repetitious prolixity one falls into when talking with kids (especially your own), that the idea was unthinkable. What about Us wiping Them out? Ditto.

Not even C. Wright Mills projects the picture of an America in which fathers and sons calmly plot the strategy for World War Three while taking a Sunday walk in that pleasant hour after church lets out and before dinner is ready.

I tried to make the most of this pedagogical opportunity. I explained to my son the irrational mechanism of mutual distrust

and fear. We — he knew this, all right — believe that They mean to conquer the world and might well be reckless enough to use The Bomb to accomplish their end. They, on the other hand — and in saying this I risked appearing in my son's eyes more than queer: just not American — are convinced that We are ruthless, evil, nuclear bullies. Many people and countries, I went on to say, believe that both of these hectoring, snarling giants are correct in their opinion of one another and, so far as world peace is concerned, both wrong. I stated the case for the poor Mercutios of this world who, fearing that they will become embroiled in the futile wars of others, say, "A plague o' both your houses!" I identified myself with this neutralist position. Both sides had provoked and been provoked so often and so senselessly that I did not see how a fair-minded person could have an unequivocal allegiance in the cold-war.

Surprisingly, my son accepted my fence-straddling.

"Wouldn't it be nice," I said, now that I had him sitting on the fence with me, "if someone could knock these two bullies' heads together. All right," I said, becoming now the benevolent big-guy restoring peace to the neighborhood, "each of you knock your own chip off your own shoulder and go home and peddle your papers."

"That might do it," my son said, hesitantly.

"It sure would make everyone in the world feel more relaxed," I persisted.

"But this guy who's going to bust up the fight . . .?" my son asked.

"Yes?"

"He'll have to be strong enough to knock their heads together won't he?"

"Yes."

"Well, what's to stop *him* from conquering the world?"

We are all familiar with the case of the scientist or inventor who, working in isolation, discovers independently what had already been found by another worker in the field. And the student who is a philosophical virgin is amazed to learn that in his

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metaphysical stumblings he has recapitulated the arguments of Plato, Aquinas, or John Dewey. So it was with my son. In his talk with me, he had arrived at that innermost sanctum of philosophy in which, as Faust observed, word, idea, and even deed give way to Power. He had recognized, unlike many of us who are addicted to ideas, that without power ideas are impotent and that with the power to make itself felt any idea must eventually engender some sort of countervailing power. This can be a pessimistic insight, since it implies the Heraclitean paradox of change as the only constant, without any guarantee of progress. And so I had no answer to the question, "What's to stop the peace-maker from becoming a war-maker?" One answer (which I wasn't prepared to give) was God. But even if I had been, I reflected that, after all, He never furnishes us with answers. He exists, we are told, so that we may be goaded into continually putting questions to ourselves and to Him. But who expects answers?

A SIGNED CONFESSION OF CRIMES  
AGAINST THE STATE

by THOMAS MERTON

I am the kind of person who must sooner or later, inevitably, fill pages of blank paper with the confession of secret crimes against the state. Why not be prepared? There is no time like the present — and who, in such a present, can promise himself a future?

My very existence is an admission of guilt. Placed before a blank sheet of paper, any blank sheet of paper, I instinctively begin to set down the list of my latest crimes against the state — any state! What else can I do? The very thoughts of a person like me are crimes against the state. All I have to do is think: and immediately I become guilty. In spite of all my efforts to correct this lamentable tendency to subversiveness and intellectual sabotage, I cannot possibly get rid of it.

What is the good of confessing it again? But that is the least I can do for, they tell me, everyone must love the state. And those who one way or another have never been able to muster up the slightest interest in the state, must now be made to show either love or hatred. One way or the other. If you don't love, hate. And if you hate, then you can turn your hatred into love by confessing it, and expiating it. If you are fool enough to love, why not go the whole way and immolate yourself with self-accusations? After all, no love of yours can ever be good enough for the state! Unfortunately, this is my case. My love is lukewarm at best.

Here is a blank sheet of paper. No one is forcing me to do this. I am trying to do it out of "love" (meaning of course hatred). (I am trying to convince myself that I am sufficiently interested in the state to hate it.) It is not easy, yet. For this reason I am sometimes tempted to leave the paper the way it is and not write on it at all. Or simply sign it, and let them write on it later. But no. Red-blooded patriotism will have none of

this. Let me confess my secret and subversive desire not to accuse myself. I have but one life and one reputation to lay down for the Nation, the People, and the Party. So let's go.

I declare that everything that I am now about to write will be either true or false, and I confess that neither I nor the state care which, so long as something is written. Everything that is written, anywhere, or by anybody, is a potential confession of crimes against the state. Including the official documents of the state itself, the official histories, etc., etc. Everything written down, whether defiant or servile, whether partisan or indifferent, turns in the end into a death warrant. I will mix defiance and servility in the desired proportions and my indifference will make me the partisan of all oppositions.

I confess that I am sitting under a pine tree doing absolutely nothing. I have done nothing for one hour and firmly intend to continue to do nothing for an indefinite period. I have taken my shoes off. I confess that I have been listening to a mockingbird. Yes, I admit that it is a mockingbird. I hear him singing in those cedars, and I am very sorry. It is probably my fault. He is singing again. This kind of thing goes on all the time. Wherever I am, I find myself the center of reactionary plots like this one.

I confess furthermore that there is a tanager around here somewhere. I do not deny that I have been looking for the tanager and after five minutes I have seen him. I am the only person who has seen this particular tanager at this particular time, since there is nobody else around. I confess that there is nobody else around because I came here on purpose to get away from the state. I avow, in a frantic paroxysm of grief, that the state and I are much better off when we have nothing to do with each other. And I even confess that I (in contradistinction to the state) believe that this separation is not only desirable but even possible. Indeed it is, at least temporarily, an accomplished fact. I confess it. I confess it. The birds are singing again, and I confess it.

(You say that this is indeed horrible, but that it is not yet horrible enough. I am sorry, I cannot improve on the truth. That is a refinement I must leave to the state, who is perfectly



equipped to do a very good job of it. I am just writing down what I have actually done, or rather what I have not done. That is usually it: I just *don't* do the things that they do on one side or the other. I am therefore probably worse than all the rest, since I am neither a partisan nor a traitor. The worst traitor is the one who simply takes no interest. That's me. Here I sit in the grass, watch the clouds go by, and like it. Quisling. Trotsky. Judas.)

I admit that nothing has happened all afternoon, and that it continues to happen. It is true, I have got my feet in an anthill, by mistake. (Ah, now we are getting somewhere!!) I might as well confess it. There are ants on the paper as I write. They are determined to take over all the writing, but meanwhile the sun shines and I am here under the pine tree. While there is still time I confess that there are ants on the paper, and a fly in my ear. I do not try to deny that there is a fly in my ear and another on my sleeve. Honestly I don't care. I am sorry. I have no desire to get rid of them. If I had a grain of true patriotism those flies would make a difference. I beg the forgiveness of the state.

The sun? Yes, it is shining. I see it shine. I am in full agreement with the sunshine. I confess that I have been in sympathy all along with the sun shining, and have not paused for two seconds to consider that it shines on account of the state. I am shattered by the realization that I have never attributed the sunshine to its true cause, namely the state. Clearly I am not worthy to exist another minute. And yet I go on shamelessly. I continue to exist. Pretty soon the ants will take over all the sunshine, but while there is still time I confess it: the sun is shining.

Signed .....

(*Deposition of reliable witness:* He has come to the wood with his shoes in his hand, and with a book. He has sat with papers and a book. He has done no work, but stood and sat in the sun over and around an anthill, at the sound of a bird. The ants are on his hands and feet while he is lying down, standing up, walking about, running, and even running very fast. Yes, there are ants all over the sunshine, running very fast.)

● PAUL PETRIE

CONFESSIONS OF A NON-CONFORMIST

At fourteen  
I decided to be  
unorthodox,  
a man  
who sings for his bread,  
and likes bread,  
who cheats himself on his taxes,  
and who would have been  
first to the moon,  
but on arriving  
has forgotten his flag.

My mother shrieked,  
and dropped her iron  
on the foot of the stove.  
My father reached  
for his razor-strap and his wallet.  
The cat yawned.

I eat carrots  
in public places.  
I carry spiders  
out of doors  
on the Sunday paper.  
I am unfriendly with my banker.  
But still wonder.  
God-fearing? Free? White? Thirty-one?  
Certainly afraid.  
I fall down cliffs in my dreams.  
I support a dentist  
single-handed,  
and have not yet mastered  
the art of breathing  
underground.



## A WRITER'S CONFESSION

*by* ROBERT LOWRY

All of them said that it was the most extraordinary foot of its kind that they had ever seen. All of the doctors said that, I mean. I remember their amazement at the shape my foot had taken, and almost always their insistence on calling in their colleagues to view it with them. It was, I suppose, what you would call a deformed foot; but it was not a clubfoot nor was it a foot lacking in the usual features that a foot normally has. My left foot had, and has, five toes—it is just that they are arranged so that the middle toe is the largest. My left foot has an arch, but this arch is unusually steep and now in my maturity and in the maturity of my foot (for it has maintained the normal rate of growth), this arch is three inches high. The heel on this foot is pointed and bony—as a matter of fact it bears some resemblance to the spike heel on a woman's shoe and this is exactly how I once saw it described in a medical journal by one of the doctors who examined it. This doctor's name was Lambert, and in later descriptions of my heel by other doctors I have noticed the addition of Dr. Lambert's name to his designation. "Lambert's spike heel" they call this condition now—for obvious reasons. And all of the authorities seem to agree that there has never been another example of Lambert's Spike Heel quite as distinct as Dr. Lambert's original, which belongs to me. Apart from the variations that I have just described, my foot is a good deal like any other foot, meaning that it is pink and white in color, that it is thicker-skinned on the bottom than on the top, and that each of my toes bears a fully developed nail.

At one point in my early childhood there was considerable discussion among the specialists that my parents consulted about the practicability and benefits of removing my left foot altogether with an operation. Our family doctor, Dr. Schnorr, after consultation with a hometown foot specialist, Dr. Twill, advised my parents to take me to Chicago for examination by still an-

other doctor whose name at this writing escapes me, although I remember that it began with a Z. At any rate, off to Chicago the three of us went, and there in the hospital where Dr. Z had his offices my foot was re-x-rayed, rephotographed and re-studied. Dr. Z even got my parents' permission to display my foot before a whole classroom full of doctors, and I will never forget how at one point each doctor filed by in front of the table where I lay. Since then I have seen people at a funeral pass in single file in front of the corpse in his coffin, and I am always reminded of those doctors passing solemnly by my foot as it lay exposed to their eyes on the table.

The decision in Chicago was not to remove my foot, and so my parents brought me back home. The trainfare, the week's hotel bill for the three of us, and the doctor's fees had cost them not only their entire savings account but a small mortgage on the house as well. Perhaps because of these and other expenses that kept my parents on the brink of financial ruin, my foot began to be associated in my mind with money and with guilt. Even the elaborate shoe that was built for me, elaborate, intricate and marvelously original as I immediately saw it to be, was not the prized possession that it might have been, if only because I constantly heard my parents speaking of it in purely financial terms. It was costly, that first steel-arched, pipe-heeled shoe of mine—and every year, as my foot and I grew, I would have to be fitted out with a whole new construction. By the time I was ten years old, my parents had lost their house in the suburbs and we had moved into a small flat near the middle of town. My father, an office worker, already looked like a tired, grey, shrunken old man. My mother cried a great deal of the time. As for me, I studied my books and the world and saw everything in relation to my foot.

The children at school taught me that I could expect no pity, no quarter, at their level. And older people, who shook their heads over me and said what a shame, continually embarrassed me. My parents' grief over my condition and their worry over the money that it had cost them somehow conspired to remove

them from me, so that I saw them at greater distance and with less affection than even my casual chums at school. Laboring along on my big queer highheeled shoe on my way home from school in the afternoon, and entering the flat to find my parents there (for it was wartime now, the firm my father worked for was on a twenty-four-hour-a-day basis, and my father was working at night and stayed at home in the daytime), I would hardly answer my mother's greeting or my father's stare.

"Have something to eat," my mother would say. Her insistence on feeding me well kept me quite fat all through my childhood. "Have a piece of jelly bread. I made some lemon sherbert for you, too. It's in the refrigerator but I don't know whether it's hard yet."

I would eat something then—perhaps the jelly bread *and* the lemon sherbert, plus a big glass of chocolate milk—and all through this eating I would say absolutely nothing to either of them. Instead I would read everything in sight—the label on the jar of mustard, a scrap of advertising matter that had come in the daily mail, a newspaper new or old, it made no difference. You will perhaps say that I was trying to escape by reading everything in sight in this way—that I had developed this method of escaping the personal and social situation which my strange foot had created. I only know that I was desperately bored, and when people were around—especially my parents—I was more bored than ever. I read to escape this boredom. I exercised my mind—my dreams, my fantasies, my ideas—in a way that my surroundings did not allow me to exercise it.

But for my foot, my monstrous foot, my parents might not have allowed me to develop in this way. I have noticed that where normal children are concerned, parents often require their complete attention and even take it upon themselves to direct adolescent activity in almost every detail. Not so with me and my parents. Their sorrow, their grief, perhaps their sense of guilt in having created this monster that was I, stilled their tongues and blunted their minds. I was free to—escape, if that is what you want to call it.

I was twenty-one when my first novel, *Nobody Dies of a Broken Heart*, was published. Since then I have written over one hundred other books, not to mention countless stories and articles and poems of mine that have been published not only here in the United States of America, but in Europe and Africa and the Far East as well—in translation, of course, and I must admit that foreign translations bring me in very little money, although I feel that they do distinguish my name. In short I am a world-famous writer. I receive fan letters, requests for help from other writers, invitations to join committees and groups and clubs—and occasionally even presents!—from all over the world. Only yesterday I received a sixteen-page fan letter from a gentleman in Japan who told me that he was a great admirer of my work. Part of the letter was written in Japanese, and I am now having this translated by a Japanese friend who teaches at the New School here in New York. But what I am getting at in telling you all of this is that not once—not *once*—have I ever mentioned my deformity, if that is what you want to call it, in my literary productions—until now, I mean. And the reason I am mentioning my foot now is that I feel I have somehow cheated and short-changed my admirers by keeping this bit of information from them.

A writer of love stories, a dreamer of beautiful, novel-length dreams—such am I, dear reader. And now at last I have shown you the hub of my creative universe, around which all of these love stories and beautiful, novel-length dreams revolve. I have shown you my foot, and the marvelous shoe which encases it. Let the literary critics of the world say what they will about my other work; let readers by the millions in twenty countries devour and digest the misty and glowing images of all my novels and stories of the past; it is only here and now, in this bit of prose that you see before you, that I have ever bared the hideous pedal root and truth of all my life's work.

## MY C MINUS IN BIOLOGY

By REED WHITTEMORE

This morning I'm going to talk about something I know practically nothing about. This will be setting a bad example on Honors Day.\* But I *am* a bad example anyway: I didn't get honors at college. I got a C Minus in Biology, which was a kind of honor for me, but I didn't distinguish myself otherwise, at least in science. So today I'm going to talk a bit about science, among other things, and I am going to bring an Important Message to the honors students in science (for I think a message is fitting for this occasion)—but I want you all to remember, especially you honor students, that you are at liberty to take what I say at a discount.

I'll start not with science, however, but with poetry—with a C minus poem by one Charles MacKay:

The smallest effort is not lost.  
Each wavelet on the ocean tost  
Aids in the ebb-tide or the flow;  
Each raindrop makes some floweret blow;  
Each struggle lessens human woe.

Now I imagine that some of you scientists here regard this poem as a poetic statement of a certain scientific law about the conservation of energy, the law which states, if I may be pardoned for popularizing it, that the smallest effort is not lost but is converted into heat. Or at least hot air in verse. But let me be unfriendly and say that I don't see any connection between Mr. MacKay and that law; it seems to me that MacKay is on a wholly different tack. True, he affirms the principle that energy is not lost, and therefore looks as if he were on the side of the law. But with him it is an act of dubious faith to affirm this; he pre-

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\* This address was delivered on the occasion of Carleton College's Twenty-second Annual Honors Day Program, May 21, 1960. This was the week, as subsequent references indicate, of the abandonment of the Summit Conference in Paris.

sents us with no evidence for his assertion, and indeed his case is so weak—each raindrop does *not* make some floweret blow, nor does each struggle lessen human woe (certainly not, for example, the struggle in Paris this week)—his case is so weak that if thermodynamics depended on it we would have to feel very sorry for thermodynamics.

I'm inclined to think that most poets are about equally unhelpful in explaining or demonstrating natural laws, though there are better poets than MacKay. Mostly their unhelpfulness is a good thing. The scientists are already getting more help than they can handle from the writers of science-fiction; I don't know what they would do if laws of thermodynamics began to be published in couplets. Still, there is a good deal of sentiment around in favor of poets, or literary people generally, moving out of the middle ages and getting, as it were, scientifically hep. After all, the argument runs, they *used* to be hep—look at Dante! Dante is always the first poet mentioned in this connection, and frequently the last. Dante is the ideal for the proponents of useful or helpful poetry: He put in poetic language, whatever that is, the going ideas of his time—why can't the poets of our time do the same?

I had a teacher in college who argued like this. He was a philosopher, but he moved indiscriminately between science and philosophy, thinking of both of them as disciplines worthy of his attention; and he was of the opinion that the poet should and could perform the function of *popularizing* anything important in either of these fields. He had only one reservation; he didn't want the poet to bring in any half-baked ideas of his own. Indeed he extended this prohibition to English teachers, and even to teachers in the humanities generally. He said,

There is no criterion within the arts or the humanities to determine whether one theory rather than another of . . . reality . . . is the correct one. This is . . . why it is a very dangerous thing for modern teachers of English to set themselves up as competent teachers and judges of a philosophy of life.



A strong statement. I have quoted him out of context, and done him a minor injustice, but as he did the arts and the humanities an injustice I feel I owe it to him. I hope it is obvious to all of you—even those of you who find your present English teacher an incompetent judge of reality—that an English teacher, or a poet, does not, by virtue of his profession, *have* to be an incompetent judge of reality. Even if his profession is to be thought of as not providing those solemn criteria there is no law keeping the poet or the English teacher from going out of his discipline—heavens, I know an English teacher who collects turtles. I assume, in other words, that the dimensions of an English teacher's province, or a philosopher's province, or a scientist's province, or a poet's province are determined as much by the man as by the label he is given in the catalogues.

My old teacher is not a rarity, though. If I put what he said in common, everyday, imprecise language, I think you would recognize it as something you have heard before. He was saying in effect that the artists of the world and their campfollowers are not thinkers but, well, artists, and you know artists. I think you would also recognize that my old teacher has his opposite number, the poet or English teacher who looks down his nose at the world's most disciplined thinkers and says, They haven't lived, They're Idealists, They're walking test tubes, and so forth. This last, fairly common judgment leads to recommendations at least as arrogant and uncivilized as the one I have quoted against English teachers—to the recommendation, for example, that scientists stay out of politics, not be allowed to enter upon the deliberations of national policy with the big bombs, and be kept inside their lead-lined laboratories. If anything there is, I'd guess, more sentiment available for restricting the activities of scientists than for restricting poets or English teachers, but I assume this is merely because poets and English teachers are regarded as harmless.

The image of the scientist as ignorant in the world's ways, and unconcerned with human values is a common one in our popular literature. Here is an example, a TV show sponsored by

## THE CARLETON MISCELLANY

Lucky Strike and aired this last March. The crime involved was a space-scientist's hit-and-run injury of a boy. The problem to be settled was the relative importance of rockets and boys. The answer, of course, was that boys are more important. The story went briefly as follows:

Now there was this space scientist, and he was in a hurry to get out to Canaveral because he was late to hop on the rocket that was about to take off for the space station. You could tell, just looking at him, that he was the kind that would always be late, and in trouble. He was a scientist.

Now after he hit the boy he went to a phone, told the police of the accident, hung up without giving his name, and drove on to his hop with the military. Then there was a commercial and they were all up in the space station listening to a broadcast of the news (of all things) of the hit-and-run accident. Said one military to another, That's the foulest kind of crime. Said the scientist, Perhaps the man had some terribly important mission. Said the military, No mission is that important. Then the scientist began to drop his test-tubes. Then the injured boy was reported to be the son of one of the military on board (in literature we call this an example of the Unities), and then the scientist disappeared. (This, I should add, is a difficult feat in a space station).

Now it turned out he'd gone outside. Some characters there-upon put on a kind of diving equipment and went outside with him and talked with him on a bunch of catwalks. Then the father of the boy mastered his urge to kill, went out himself, got in a man-to-man talk with the scientist, got him back in and there was another commercial. Finale: the injured boy in the hospital, better, forgave the scientist, but the military daddy said that of course the scientist must pay for his crime because that is the law.

This seems, to me, a representatively inaccurate text about the limitations of science. Looked at tolerantly it may be thought of as a tasteless but innocent sentimentalizing of the difficult relationship between impersonal scientific activity and the indi-



vidual's responsibility to other human beings. I venture to say that 90% of the audience watching it thought the story corny but essentially true. I am intolerant here, however; I find the story untrue to its rotten core. There is no such conflict as that presented between a scientist's obligations to science and his obligations to humanity. To walk away from the injured boy is not, I must point out, scientific. Reason does not demand, in this instance, human irresponsibility, the sacrifice of blood for progress, but, among other things, an intelligent weighing of probabilities, of percentages. In the case of the boy's injury the *possible* courses available to the scientist are many, but most of them are not sensible courses because they *probably* lead to disaster. Thus there is the probability that, if not caught, the scientist will be rendered nervous and uneasy for years (we call this conscience). There is the greater probability that he will be caught. And there is the certainty that, if caught, he will be more severely punished for running away than for staying at the scene (we call this justice). Against these there is the fantastically remote possibility that by missing the trip into space the scientist will slow up human progress, or even slow up his private chances for a raise. And yet, faced with these dismally unequal choices, our villain chooses the latter; he bets on the least chance and then subjects us for the rest of the story to a scientist's repentance for being too *scientific*. I submit that, following such a performance, this man could be refused, forever after, on scientific grounds, a job as janitor in a toothpaste factory.

Such stories emerge from thinking too narrowly of the scientist's role. I bring this one in merely to illustrate the fallacy, and then to assert that whatever generalization we may set up to characterize science on the one hand and poetry on the other, we must recognize that the generalizations are a verbal convenience for talking simply about distinctions that are not simple at all. The distinctions we would like to make between science and poetry are blurred by every scientist and every poet. With these words of caution I would like to go on to another, quite different generalization, one put forth by C. P. Snow in his re-

cent controversial book, *Two Cultures and The Scientific Revolution*.

Snow sets up as an archetypal figure for the modern poet Mr. T. S. Eliot, a quite different archetype from the brainless *artiste* I have already mentioned. Snow quotes Eliot, in one of the latter's most pompously humble moments, asserting that we in this decayed literary culture of ours can "hope for very little, but that he [Eliot] would feel content if he and his co-workers could prepare the ground for a new Kyd or a new Greene," that is, a new minor verse dramatist who might in his turn in a small way prepare the way for something bigger. Then Snow comments on this remark:

That is the tone, restricted and constrained, with which literary intellectuals are at home; it is the subdued voice of their culture.

The archetypal figure for science, on the other hand, says Snow, is someone who goes about trumpeting, "This is the heroic age of science! This is the Elizabethan age!" Snow adds that some of us have heard this with annoyance, and have realized that the scientists are casting about in their ranks for their own equivalent for the role of Shakespeare; but we have unfortunately *not* realized that such a booster of science is, whether we like it or not, "absolutely right." Then Snow goes on to assert that the optimism of scientists (presumably the trumpeting ones) is not a shallow one, though the literary intellectuals sometimes think so; he says that most of the scientists he has known have felt with the non-scientists that "the individual condition of each of us is tragic." But, he adds, nearly all the scientists

would see no reason why, just because the individual condition is tragic, so must the social condition be. . . .  
. . . There is plenty in our condition which is not fate, and against which we are less than human unless we do struggle.

Here I am unfortunately reminded of the poet MacKay's strug-

glings, and I would like to see how the scientist would struggle, scientifically at least, against Mr. Khrushchev's trip to a French barnyard last Tuesday. But aside from this complaint, I find that Snow's archetypes are ones that I can take fairly seriously. This is partly because they happen to agree with a couple of my own that I have discoursed about in another lecture \* in which I describe poetry as a language of weakness and science as a language of strength. For T. S. Eliot is at least pretending to weakness in the remarks I have quoted, and certainly the trumpeting scientists are showing, or asserting, their strength.

I say I sympathize with these archetypes, but before I go into them I think I should point to their obvious limitations. In poetry, for example, we find many poets who not only do not fit the Eliot image but who actively oppose it; some of them display their own, non-Eliotic brands of weakness, some of them are insufferably arrogant and assertive, some of them think that they, all by themselves, constitute a golden age of poetry. And on the other side, in science, we do not, I think, find trumpeting scientists everywhere we look. Caution and humility are qualities to be found in the best scientific circles; many, many scientists lean over backwards *not* to draw bigger conclusions than they think they have evidence for; and many, many scientists dislike scientific trumpeting as much as Snow says the literary intellectuals do.

And yet, despite these obvious limitations, I think the Snow archetypes are worthy ones. Let us think for a moment of the intellectual positions of the two archetypes. A position of strength I would describe as the position of someone who hopes, even expects to accomplish something. A position of weakness is the position of someone who can at best only imagine commenting, from the sidelines, on the possibilities of accomplishment. Thus it is frequently said that a poem is useless; some poets in fact take great pride in the uselessness of their product, and severely resent those who threaten to harness their talents. In science, however, the impulse toward accomplishment is very

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strong. It is to be found everywhere, in the working out of an equation, in the carrying through of a series of experiments which prove something; and finally, in the construction of hypotheses which, it is to be hoped, will be provable. I'm not talking merely about applied science here; I'm not talking about where, when or how a scientific discovery may be used; I am merely talking about the basic impulse in science to get things settled, an impulse which may sometimes be found in poetry but does not, I think, generally characterize it. Instead the poet seems mostly content—or perhaps it would be better to say resigned—to take things as they are.

Let me give you an example, again out of TV, but this time out of the higher realms of TV, that is, Channel Two. Last year our mathematics department bravely took over for a term Carleton's weekly half-hour spot on that Channel. I watched a good many of the programs, and I remember particularly one in which Professor May was settling things, accomplishing things out on his farm. It seemed he had a problem of setting up two light switches for one light, and then three for one light (for having installed two in the house he decided he needed a third in the barn). Well, he worked it all out for us, and I understood it all fine except that I went out for a sandwich, and when I came back there was a great big equation on the board and I didn't know where it came from. So by the end of the program the switch problem was, for Mr. May, settled. He knew how to go about putting in two switches for one light, and three for one light (and he even threatened to do four for one light) *under any conditions*; he was, in other words, in a fine position of strength with regard to those light switches and he had gotten there by virtue of his own rational activity.

But the poet? What does the poet do when faced with those light switches? Well, there are poets and poets, and I suppose some of them could be taught to understand Mr. May's equation, particularly if they didn't keep going out for sandwiches—but I'm not sure that they, as poets, are as eager to understand those switches as Mr. May would like them to be.

Suppose the switches were to be put in the hands of a poet. He might, I suppose, begin on the farm as Mr. May did; but when the time for conversion came, the conversion into poesy rather than mathematics, what would he do? In the first place switches are a fairly low poetic subject, so the poesy settled on might be something like Ogden Nash's. Then there would be the problem of rhymes which, for various reasons, is a difficult one with "switches." Then there would be—but I won't go into all the problems; let me just say that the poem might finally get written, and a small horrible piece of it might sound like this:

I ran into some hitches  
 Setting up my switches,  
 And while trying to get them working in three distinct  
 positions,  
 I short-circuited something and had to call the Fire De-  
 partment and a corps of electricians.

Now what I am getting at here, aside from a bad joke, is that the poet decided not to talk about Mr. May's problem at all. He evaded it, failed to face up to it, decided not to resolve it, settle it, master it—but to talk around it. Is this not weakness? I think so. And I think it is typical of poets to be always temporizing, talking about how they felt at such-and-such a time and place, rather than facing up to the rational demands of an occasion. As truth-seekers they are thus, frequently, most inept.

These weaknesses, especially in the modern poet, are notorious and have been much criticized. In defense the poets have said a good many things, sometimes contradictory things, that I have no time for here. Instead I simply concede the failing and look at the opposite failing, if it is one, the failing of the scientist. His is the failing of strength. Fresh from his triumphs with light switches or hydrogen bombs he moves confidently into other areas by, I suppose, the old principle of analogy: if it's like this here, then it's like this there. As a result we now have many celebrated scientific analogists in our midst, and I think that if I invoke just two names you will know what I am talking about.



First there is spaceman or rocketman Wernher Von Braun; second there is Edward Teller, "the father of the hydrogen bomb." These two scientists have, apparently by analogy, set themselves up in our politics, diplomacy and military affairs with a vengeance, thereby securing for themselves the dislike of hundreds of T. S. Eliots, as well as hundreds of less analogical scientists. Von Braun has recently even advanced into literature, using his scientific weight to get published an unbelievably sterile, anti-septic science-fiction thing in *This Week* magazine. Teller has not, to my knowledge, descended to this, but he has made his weight felt in almost all other circles. He himself expressed neatly the positivist philosophy of science in its barest form when he said, in an article for the magazine *Foreign Affairs*:

I would like to summarize my ideas in a simple statement. Let us start our planning with the word 'Do'. It is a mistake to begin with 'don't' . . . action can be fruitful.

This sounds very much like Mr. Snow, does it not? But what was it Dr. Teller wanted to do? He wanted to continue the atomic bomb tests.

I submit, without reference to my feelings about the continuance of the tests, that there is a simple logical joker in applying the scientist's general "do it" philosophy here. One can, for example, *do* a number of things beside continue the tests: one can set up a detection system *against* testing; one can devote one's atomic energies to matters which do not involve bomb tests; one can even move heaven and earth to stop the tests no matter what the Russians do. Now these other possibilities may not seem as practical to you as Dr. Teller's, for certainly his position is a strong one, difficult to argue against. All I wish to point out about it is the obvious, that it is not, primarily, a scientific position but a political position. To sustain it he must marshal evidence not from the stronghold of the laboratory but from the treacherous swamps of history, evidence tending to prove that in diplomatic relations, in relations between sovereign states,



brute power is ultimately what counts. Therefore, in this area, we should, I think, look at Dr. Teller's qualifications as a politician or historian rather than at his qualifications as a scientist.

I have done so, briefly, and I am not impressed. Here is an affirmative historical statement, for example, from the very article in *Foreign Affairs* I have already quoted from:

In the years since the end of World War II the U.S. has acted with the wisdom that comes from sad experience. Had we been as active in the 1930's in foreign affairs as we are now, World War II would not have occurred.

To any serious student of the origins of war this must surely appear to be an arrogant remark. Without troubling to discuss what the causes of the War were—and Lord knows one could bring forth many possible causes—he asserts without any qualification that had *we* been more *active* in foreign affairs the war would not have occurred. In the first place, in what sense active? Active as traders? Diplomats? Or active as militarists? Active with U-2's over Omsk or Stalinsk? And in the second place, how much control does he think "we" can exert over any "they" across the ocean? Despite our recent following of the Teller line I don't see that we had much control over that "they" in the French barnyard this week. What I am saying is that, at the least, Dr. Teller might have inserted a "perhaps" in his statement, or an "I think" rather than, flatly, "World War II would not have occurred." From this statement I think I know the dogmatist Dr. Teller is, and I think he does no more credit to the world of science in being so than that curious scientist on TV who ran over the child on the way to Canaveral. I don't know where this dogmatism in him comes from, but wherever it comes from it is there, and because it is there Teller is, I think, no better qualified in most important respects to speak to the point of the bomb tests than *any other man of weakness*.

Would I have him, therefore, not speak? Of course not. My position this morning is that the C minuses of the world may

speak as well as the A pluses, but, simply, that they should speak from no more strength than they have. Unfortunately Dr. Teller speaks from more strength than he has. He comes on stage in his white coat; he parades before congressional committees and before the world as an authority on everything because he happens to be an authority on the bomb. A scientific opponent of his, Dr. Harrison Brown, has remarked that all of Teller's beliefs about the bomb tests proceed from "a deep-rooted hatred of the Soviet Union which borders on the fanatic." Dr. Brown may or may not be right; I have no way of judging his judgment; but I do know that while Brown's judgment may be right, it is itself a judgment from weakness—it is an evasion of the issues Teller has dedicated himself to; it is the kind of judgment put forth in law courts and congressional committee meetings that we call character assassination. In passing such a judgment Brown has therefore laid himself open to charges of being less than pure. Inevitably when we leave an argument in favor of discussing the personalities of the persons arguing, we get into such a fix; we enter upon the world of weakness; we descend into the C minus hole I frankly speak from.

I don't think it is possible to ignore that hole, or fill it up, or make a fortress of it when one is dealing with international relations or any of the thousand other areas of weakness we find around us. But I do think there is a better person to do the character assassinating than Dr. Brown or myself. There is Dr. Teller himself. I have already said that I wish he had put a "perhaps" or an "I think" into his remark about the causes of the Second World War. I would have him go further. I would have *him*, in those public places where he wears his white coat, distinguish for his lay audience very clearly between Teller the laboratory man and Teller the international relations man. I would have *him*, rather than Dr. Brown, preface his remarks by telling us how he personally arrived at his present convictions. In other words I would ask *him* to analyze his own motives. I assume that as a fairly rational being he would do a good job at this; cer-

tainly this way we would at least be getting the assassination from the horse's mouth.

Am I not asking too much? Why should I single out a scientist to criticize for overstepping the natural bounds of his given field? After all, there are reporters and diplomats and heads of nations and certainly poets who do this sort of thing every day as a matter of course. Indeed, built into the American (and I gather the Russian) system of Getting Ahead in the World is the principle that we should always state things strongly, that we should not shilly-shally, that we should hit 'em between the eyes. Compared with the Khrushchevs and Drew Pearsons and Allen Ginsbergs of the world, Dr. Teller is a man of almost classic moderation. I pick on him, however, because he is a scientist (that is, a man identified with strength) and because, as a result, his words carry greater weight than that of a Drew Pearson or poet. The evidence for the weight of scientist's judgment *outside the laboratory* is all around us. We see scientists everywhere in government, industry and education playing the double role of scientist and pundit, or scientist and public relations man, or scientist and five-star general, or even scientist and college president. This is fine. This is wonderful. I would not for a minute have it otherwise. But while this is an admirable result of the golden age of science, it has brought with it the dangers of which I speak. It seems to me that because of his new-found position of strength the scientist has a very special social obligation to recall for us his limitations. I think it might even be fitting, for example, for the scientist who wishes to tell us how to preserve world peace to tell us first whether he is at peace with his colleagues or his wife, corny though that may sound. And fitting for the scientist who would have us assume attitudes of strength and unyieldingness to tell us whether this is the way he settles things in his classes. I think in other words that the scientist has the simple public obligation—aside from his private obligation to himself to know what he does know—the public obligation to speak with the caution, restraint and humility traditionally attributed to scientists. I think he has a larger

social responsibility than the poet here, for the poet has already confessed his weakness or been discovered in it. The poet speaks with no laboratory behind him, but only a garret or a tavern or some other hole. Not that I would not like the poet to speak with restraint also, but I think I see more practical importance in trying to persuade the scientist to do so.

That is why this morning, speaking from my C minus hole, I think of myself as addressing primarily the honors students in science. I AM NOW COMING TO MY MESSAGE. It is you who will be carrying forth into the world the "do-it" philosophy of *your* golden age. To *you*, I say (my rhetoric rising appropriately for the occasion), to *you*, I say that there *is* weakness in your strength, and that one of the most scientific acts of your life will be to resolve to yourself never to forget that fact.

But with this platitude I am not done. Humility is a science that a good many of us only get a low C minus at. We profess it vociferously, but in our actions, in our authoritativeness on any other subject except humility, and even in our tone of voice as we profess to humility, we show that we really know better. I have already cited T. S. Eliot in this connection. Now let me cite an example of C minus humility in the world of science.

I return to Mr. Von Braun. There are more distinguished examples that I have not time for, but no more pointed example. In his epic for *This Week*, we are treated to nothing but an account of the scientific and mechanical wonders of the Martian world for three installments; and the image given us of the Martians, though they are said to look like us, is essentially robot-like; they are like the machines they have invented; they have no life whatever in the story outside that pertaining to their thought pillows and their vacuum-tube subways. Then suddenly, at the very end, Von Braun has Mr. Big among the Martians make this remarkable statement:

The history of this planet [Mars] has taught us that idolatry of our technical accomplishments constitutes the worst evil with which we threaten our race and civilization. . . . If we worship scientific achievement,

we kill humility, and of humility alone can be born any further progress, scientific or otherwise.

*What* does one do with this hollow protestation? Well, one can get mad for one thing—that's what I do, and that's what a good many non-scientists do when they hear a scientist speak of his glorious triumphs for forty-five minutes and then conclude with a cautionary, two-minute word about the limitations of man's knowledge. But getting mad doesn't help much; perhaps it is better to be rational, and simply to say, like a literary critic, that *if* the theme of Von Braun's epic is truly the need for humility, then humility should inform his whole work. Poets and literary critics have a respect for facts too, after all, and when the facts contradict the statements then they turn thumbs down. Why is it that Polonius remains a fool even while uttering wisdom? Because his wisdom is like Von Braun's in the instance I have given.

I submit that no true humility can be achieved in the last two minutes of a novel, a lecture or a life. This is something that our poets, speaking from weakness, know feelingly. They know it because, for one thing, "Art's subject" *is*, as W. H. Auden put it, "the human clay," and they know it for another because they find all around them the agents of strength—quite frequently the scientists—protesting against literature's weaknesses as if the agents of strength were themselves somehow immune to these weaknesses. Such immunity seems hard to entertain this week when we are all, in a way, to use another Auden phrase, defenseless under the night, defenseless from ourselves as well as from that "they" across the ocean. We live in a C minus world, not a Martian vacuum tube or a lead-lined laboratory. The analogies between those antiseptic places and the world are *not* working. And while it may be, as Mr. Snow says, less than human not to struggle to make them work, it is also less than scientific—it is an act of the simplest pride—to talk as if they *were* working, now, when all the evidence suggests that despite the analogies the human condition remains pretty much the same. I thank you.

# THE QUARTER'S EPIC

## EBENEZER AND HIS MANNED ROCKET

### CANTO I

And the dawn.  
And Ebenezer arose and paced the lawn;  
Checked multitudinous instruments and dials;  
Jotted top secret stuff for hist'ry's files;  
Stared at the dewy sky, hands on hips;  
Took out a golden bugle; raised to lips;  
Puffed up cheeks, took breath, and (leaning heavily  
On warmed and waiting mouthpiece) rendered *reveille*.

*And Ebenezer was sixty and straight as a tree,  
And a scientist with honors from M.I.T.*

Instant from all seven of seven doors,  
Dressed in space-age sweatshirts and plus-fours,  
Emerged his cohorts, ready for ascension,  
And fell in ranks before him at attention  
"All present, sir," the sergeant cried, and smartly  
Saluted Ebenezer, who then tartly  
Said if Mars or Russia they would trouble,  
Damn quick should they learn to live on double;  
Then marched them off, hip hip, to rocket gleaming  
In sun's first rosy fingers, banners streaming.

*For Eben knew the elements and man  
And made them tremble lightning quicker than.*

Thus, on a morn in June, while mortals slept,  
Science and its minions forward stepped,  
And soon were fast aboard and locked in place,  
All facing forward, grim-lipped, into space.  
Meanwhile Eben, midships, button fingering  
That'd send them heavenward with no malingering,  
Began the countdown: "NINETY; EIGHTY-NINE;  
EIGHTY-EIGHT"; and so forth — which, though fine  
For tales that take their fans by storm,



## SCIENCE, THE STATE, ETC.

I'll leave out here in deference to my form,  
Which is too grand to be a slave of time,  
Serving instead th' eternal and sublime;  
And while he counts I'll prate for p'r'aps a page  
Of Science in the large, its Golden Age,  
Of what it's done for mankind, and of how  
Without it we would not be where we're now.

OH Science! Science! Science! now victorious —  
With pill and noble pile thou makest glorious  
Music in the world's laboratories  
And turn'st men's thoughts to brighter territories  
Than poor base man himself, whose faults notorious  
(Harped on by sick moralists censorious)  
Are soon forgot in Science's flirtation  
With viruses, equations, radiation,  
Fruitflies, rats, test-tubal procreation,  
Solid fuels, soft water, sanitation,  
Thrust, torque, boost, lift, blast, acceleration,  
Teller, Von Braun and atoms for salvation.  
OH Science what a hot shot you've become.  
In praising you I'm stricken deaf and dumb,  
And need a muse to help me briefly peer  
In th' heaven reserved for you (not me) this year.

Muse, are you there?  
Are you there, Muse?  
Do I hear thee, old thing?  
Are those your footsteps in the corridor,  
Crunch crunch,  
As you tiptoe toward me wearing your old Apollonian  
Slippers?

OH Science! Science! Science! now victorious —  
With pill and noble pile thou makest glorious —

Well!

I guess old Muse has been here all the time.  
I hadn't noticed her metronome about,  
Or her calipres, tuning forks, red pencils, scissors, scotch tape,  
But I guess she's here all the same, which is good to know —  
For without her I'm insecure, and what I have written  
Never seems *right* somehow, as, for example . . .

THE CARLETON MISCELLANY

"FIVE; FOUR; THREE; TWO; ONE!"

— A quavering voice (aft) cried, "The trip's begun!"  
Seven thin mouths trembled ope together,  
Fourteen fists curled round the arm-rest leather,  
And all brains framed as one the one great query,  
"Whither steer we?" —

All, that is, but he who was pronounced,  
From Princeton to Argonne, prince of long counts,  
Old Ebeneze,  
Who, as the count ran out, began to freeze  
(As ne'er before in all his years three-score)  
With his long, lank, button finger poised before  
Its fatal object, like that child  
Of rotten Denmark, who with wild,  
Wild eyes on Claudius, 'n' all black-biled  
Found that to plunge the dagger one brief foot  
Was more than he could plunge; he couldn't do't;  
AND SO like the lion poised 'fore Daniel's throat  
With his tendons tensed, his steep brown tail afloat —  
But I lose touch.

I mean that Ebenezer, in the clutch,  
Would not, could not, did not push the button.  
And so, what happened?

For the moment, nuttin.  
Instead, from the bucket seats where they sat faint,  
The others, 'mazed, heard Eb begin complaynt:  
"Alas, what boots it with incessant care  
To spend the money of the poor taxpayer?  
Were it not better done to stay at home  
And keep not Mars but Rome from sacking Rome?  
Science is the spur that patriots raise  
To scorn the alien, live pure button days;  
Then comes the Summit and the empty chairs,  
The Japanese abasement, Cuban scares,  
And slits the thin-spun scheme; AND all the praise.  
And then, alas! . . ."

— but at that soulful phrase  
The wrinkled hand and finger that had hung  
O'erdue o'er those many lives was flung  
(Oh, was it a dramatic Byronism  
Or unmeant cataclysmic paroxysm?) —  
Was flung far out and down, ah down, to where  
The button lurked and waited, red and bare,

And fell hard upon it. OH! from stews  
Of Vera Cruz to avenues  
Of Moscow, Reykjavik and Syracuse,  
Mortals heard the noise and shook in shoes.

*For Ebenezer he was a scientist,  
And, in the old phrase, what he kissed stayed kissed.*

## CANTO II

At the tender age of ten  
When his father Sid was mixing two parts of hydrogen  
With something or other  
(In the basement where he could seldom hear Eben's mother),  
Eben decided that he, like his father, would follow  
In the footsteps neither of Mercury nor Apollo,  
But nature, nature in test tubes, clouds and rocks,  
Nature divorced from the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh (upstairs) was heir to.  
He'd prepare to  
Conquer the air, the sea, the earth and the atom  
By keeping at 'em  
The way his mother did  
With her Sid.  
At fifteen  
He designed a perpetual motion machine.  
Three years later  
He got scholarships from Harvard, Caltech, Chicago, Carleton, Ben-  
nington, Coe and his father's alma mater,  
M. I. T.,  
The last of which took him in and gave him quick mastery  
Of chemistry, physics and all inhuman relations,  
Including those between nations,  
SO THAT  
At the time of his graduation he knew whereat  
All villainy lay (overseas where it was begat);  
AND resolved  
That he'd sleep but three hours a night until he'd evolved  
Such wonders as'd make the arrogant heathen abroad  
Awed.  
AND so he went at it;  
AND for twenty or thirty stern years he consistently batted  
Six or eight hundred percent with the Army and Navy,  
SO THAT most of their basic-research cut was, for him, gravy;

## THE CARLETON MISCELLANY

AND testified

(For every committee of Congress that could funds provide)

To the urgency of his plan to keep the world petrified;

AND won so many medals for serving the Pentagon

That somebody said he needed a suit to hang them on;

SO made him a Colonel,

AND appointed him to lead the first of our nation's space troops to  
regions supernal.

Does this not bring you-all up-to-date on ol' Ebeneze?

I think so; and so in a flash I'll return to his tragic freeze,

Merely observing here briefly that he, in his time,

Managed to make more enemies than Fagan or Frankenstein.

### CANTO III

It is perhaps not generally understood

(Except by those like myself who have withstood

All tales of smooth sailing for Man when he gets to the space age)

That the second stage of a rocket should follow the first stage,

And thus take place

When the rocket's up in the vasty, not at the Base.

Now whether or not Eb's bilious delay contributed to

The subsequent double-firing and resultant to-do

Is a matter that will be discussed down the ages by sages,

Some of them taking the line that of sin the wages

Is what they has always been, others complaining

That rockets are strictly a-moral, still others claiming

That evidence and not argument should decide

(Which is fine except that the first, in this case, took a ride).

The one fact agreed on by all amidst the debate

Is that both stages *did* blow as one, and the rocket, late,

Then left so fast that observers (those not cremated)

Thought that it left not at all but evaporated,

And reported this news to the Pentagon, which quick let soar

One of its best cover stories, writ weeks before,

About a large meteor falling in Utah's lands bad

And digging a crater exactly the size of a launching pad.

The story had just hit the wires when another came in

Of a strange object blundering by the towers of the Kremlin;

And this tale in turn had just crazed the nation's press

When Washington saw a like object swiftly progress

By the White House at tree height, and to the left slightly

Of the Washington Monument, glowering brightly.

## QUARTER'S EPIC

What was it? Well, radio's prominent big and quick thinkers  
Mentioned saucers, sun spots, airport blinkers,  
Optical tricks played by light on humid June days,  
And a new model U-2 flown low on account of the haze.  
But they'd little air time to be thinking, alas, so deep,  
Before the Kremlin reported another alien peep  
Trespassing like its sire but somewhat higher —  
To avoid, the Kremlin asserted, deadly anti-peep fire;  
And shortly thereafter the President, out on his lawn,  
Missed a mere four-inch putt and was swiftly withdrawn  
To the wine cellar by six secret-service scrubs,  
Five of whom ran with him and one with his clubs,  
When an object passed at the same height and vanished at treeline  
Beyond the Potomac's banks, like the Cheshire feline.  
Between each of the four "attacks," two here and two there,  
Precisely one hour had passed, which meant the affair  
Was taking on order; it would be in the hair  
Again, at four-ten, of the Muscovite Bear;  
At five-ten again of the Eagle; and so forth. But where,  
Where had it come from? And was it an "it?"  
The newscasters pondered this question and what it would hit,  
While the populace popped in its cars and blocked all the bridges  
Leading to safety in Md. and Va.'s blue ridges,  
And the Air Force's pundits in secret listened unnerved  
To the jibberish coming from space on the channel reserved  
For the ill-fated bird.  
All in all things were blurred.  
And at four-ten plus one, when Moscow bragged with delight  
That the bestial invader had passed at a cowardly height,  
Those few yet strolling the Mall took panic and flight,  
While the President, who in a lull had been whisked away  
To a very deep hole in Maryland where he could play  
Miniature golf and at leisure direct the armed forces  
With all the most modern communications resources,  
Announced that whatever it was it was under surveillance  
By the Army and Navy, who'd act against foreign assailants —  
By which (in six thousand words) he seemed to imply  
That everyone should stay calm till the Fourth of July.

*(This will be continued)*

REED WHITTEMORE

## **A SMALL ANTHOLOGY OF SMALL POEMS**

● PHILIP MURRAY

### **WEEDS**

The mountain came to me;  
I said, "Go back.  
I was just setting out;  
At least let me unpack."

\* \* \*

The flower cried to the sun,  
"I have followed you all day."  
The sun coldly replied,  
"You were made that way."

\* \* \*

The ocean is not so deep,  
Nor the sky so wide;  
I have my imagination,  
I have my pride.

\* \* \*

"I've discovered," the young drifter said,  
"The big thing is me."  
I looked fifty years ahead;  
His giantship was still in that small country.



\* \* \*

I took my body to the beach  
To study the perfect forms of men.  
My body sulked in the sand all day;  
We won't go there again.

\* \* \*

The lizard told the sphinx,  
"I am younger than you, and I too have a secret."  
The sphinx told the lizard,  
"You will be old, and you will forget."

\* \* \*

"Tell me a blind story."  
The blind man said.  
"Tell me a deaf story,"  
The deaf man shouted.

\* \* \*

Learn every language;  
You will finally meet  
A man who speaks no language  
Living on your own street.

● ERNEST KROLL

*from AMERICAN PANELS*

THE PIN-UP

The shapeliest map in the place,  
She fills the soldier with rapture;  
Between her feet and her face  
Lies the country he'd rather capture.

TRUCK LINE

Great vans broad as ships  
Moving all night through  
From factory to you  
Enough potato chips.

TRUCK DRIVER

Violence opens the sluices  
Of his foul gift of the gab;  
Solitude wakens his juices:  
Priapus sings from the cab.

SALESMAN

The man behind the big cigar  
Who sized you up at a glance  
And seems to own the smoking car,  
Travels in ladies' pants.

TOWN MEETING

Freedom of speech  
Includes the choice  
To relish the sound  
Of one's own voice.

ADAPTITUDE

Things once simple now made subtler,  
All's adaptable, set for any trend;  
The Lazy Susan shall yet end  
By marrying the Silent Butler.

MODERN OCCASIONS

Each new occasion beckoning,  
I wonder: Shall I try it?  
Attend the gas range festival?  
Visit the vitamin riot?

MOTEL

A second home almost,  
With knotty pine and all;  
The carpet, wall to wall  
And coast to coast.

● ROBERT LOWRY

THE LIGHTS OF THE SANTA MARIA

*Described For His Tribe By The First Indian To See Them . . .*

"On sails great crosses—one boat first  
then two other boats—Men—very dark sky  
and first the lights, then morning, then the sails,  
then the crosses, then the Men: I observed  
from well-considered hidden position—they came ashore;  
now it was morning.  
Little bit later one called me  
Indian."

ANOTHER READER WRITES

"SIR: Can we truly with such a symbol  
cross over en masse into heaven carrying Him  
before us, among us, above us?  
That was after all the idea but  
will they let us into that  
place called Heaven and are you  
absolutely sure?—PUZZLED."

● JOHN TAGLIABUE

FROM A JAPANESE JOURNAL

1.

If an insect in a leaf  
Speaks of the sun  
Praises its green glory  
What should man do  
But rejoice in this divine story?

2.

Ah the philosophy of the parsley  
Taught me simplicity.

3.

Whatever I see  
Becometh me  
Whatever I be  
Becometh the world.

4.

O the timeless Buddha of a leaf  
On the calm radiance of a stream  
Or my dream. Where the tree rises  
The sky rises. The lark rises.  
Into the clarity of the sky  
Love makes us dream:  
All things are one.

EPITHALAMIUM

By HISAYE YAMAMOTO

For Yuki Tsumagari, the Japanese girl from San Francisco, it was the next-to-the-last day at the Zualet Community on Staten Island. Tomorrow, Madame Marie would drive her to the village station and she would embark on the three-thousand mile journey by bus which would take her back to her mother and father on Saturn Street, to her married younger brother and his wife (with the two little girls who looked just like Japanese dolls), to her friend Atsuko who had been her soulmate since they had first met during the war at the Utah concentration camp called Topaz.

Also, although she did not know it, today was her wedding day. Yet, she should have suspected something unusual. She had awakened in the morning with Hopkins running through her mind:

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed . . .*

As bookish as she had been all her life, she had never come to consciousness before with poetry singing in her head. Perhaps this was to be the first and last time. In any case, the lines had sustained her all that strange day long, walking the wooded mile down Meadowvale Lane to meet Marco at the village trolley station (he had phoned and threatened, still drunk, to go away forever if she did not marry him that very day), riding with him on the trolley to St. George, standing before the city clerk in that little room with the podium, the American flag, and the potted palm, where a fellow civil servant had hastily been called in as a witness, promising to love, honor, and obey this inebriated man.

Afterwards, Marco was quite miffed because Yuki had re-



fused to go to his hotel room with him. He went by himself to check out and return the key and must have found a bottle in his room because he came back to the rear stairway, where she had been waiting, drunker than ever. They rode the trolley only as far back as Princess Bay station, and because he was in no condition to take back to the Community, they remained there at the covered wooden waiting bench, he passed out with his head on her lap, and as she sometimes gazed down at that once perfect (many women had sought him), now battered face, flushed and swollen with drink, she thought, "This is my husband." For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part.

The months since March, when he had first confessed his love, had been alternately lovely and sordid and terrible and sweet. She had got more than she bargained for, certainly. Once they had walked up Meadowvale Lane in the Spring rain and stopped every few minutes to cling and kiss, careless of their sodden clothes and the few cars that slowly passed. There was scarcely a nook or cranny of the Community that they had not defiled, as well as the wooded stretch of beach belonging to a nearby monastery and seminary, and various parts of the woods. Against her will? Hardly (she had made no outcry; she could have firmly refused to go for those walks), but she had urgently sensed that it was against God's will, as though some supernatural agent had been sent to deter them from their immorality; each moment stolen for love had been unmistakably tainted.

On the beach belonging to the monastery, where Yuki had been so enchanted on Holy Wednesday and Thursday nights by the sweet, pure voices of the young seminarians as they took turns singing the psalms of the Tenebrae; where she had, amazed, felt the trickle of tears down her cheeks during a couple of the responsories when the black-gowned young men had clustered together (met together as though they might have been in some football huddle) and boomed out:

. . . *Latro de cruce clamabat, dicens: Memento mei, Domine, dum veneris in regnum tuum.* (The thief from the cross cried

THE CARLETON MISCELLANY

out: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.")

... *Quomodo conversa es in amaritudinem, ut me crucifigeres, et Barabbam dimitteres?* (How art thou turned to bitterness, that thou shouldst crucify me, and release Barabbas?)

—it was there that she had learned for herself (pushed down with insistence onto the rocky ground amidst the trees) about man's desire. She had not known that it would be so painful the first time, or so quick. She thought, I am being killed! And she remembered that as a small child, it had taken the full strength of both her grandfather and father to hold her over the Japanese wooden tub of the bathroom for her mother to wash her hair, as she kicked and struggled and screamed, "*Shini-yoru! Shini-yoru!* I'm dying! I'm dying!"

Later (they had not been able to look at each other for awhile), as they sat on the huge damp rocks at low tide, some instinct, so positive that she had blushed for shame, informed her that they had been watched, in shocked silence, by some young seminarian who had come to pray by the ocean in solitude.

It was the same elsewhere. On another stretch of beach, semi-hidden by a semi-circle of rocks, they had either been nearly discovered or discovered by a couple of kids racing their horses up and down the edge of the water. In the woods, those enormous black mosquitoes (Staten Islanders claim that they come over in squadrons every Summer from the marshes of New Jersey across the bay), had bitten every inch of her thighs. Near the creek, where she had been so delighted to find earlier that Spring (it had been St. Joseph's Day) those first curious shells, striated maroon and pale green, of skunk cabbage, the back of her dress had been streaked with mud. And always there had been the anxiety of being suddenly come upon, of scandalizing the whole Community, and, most of all, of giving grief to saintly, gentle Madame Marie.

Thus, she had become a physical, moral, and spiritual ruin. She had secretly endured a miscarriage towards the middle of

July, and hadn't been of much help to the Community since then, with general pains in the womb and kidney regions. She had bled for twenty days, and for a few days, she had barely been able to walk. She had hid in her room then, emerging only for meals. How relieved she was to remember that this was the only hard and fast Rule of the Zualet Community, that one show up for the three meals of the day.

Madame Marie, in her wisdom, had early suspected that something was amiss. "Are you having trouble with your period?" she stopped to ask one day when Yuki was making a half-hearted effort to straighten out the Clothes Room. The Clothes Room always needed straightening out—members of the Community were forever trying on this or that item of clothing contributed by its benefactors, and nothing was put back in order. "No", Yuki had lied. She had held up a large brassière and tried to make a joke of it. "I've never needed one of these," she said. "Once I bought a couple, the smallest I could find, and they just kept hiking up on me and making me uncomfortable." Madame Marie had smiled. "Delusions of grandeur!" she commented. And the inquisition was over.

But the time Yuki had remained in her room for several days, Madame Marie had called her into her own cozy and book-lined room for a conference. Not a conference, exactly. She had glimpsed Marco and Yuki together in Yuki's room, too physically close to each other for mere conversation, and she had decided to tell Yuki a few of the love stories of the Zualet Community during its twenty years of existence.

Many alcoholics had come to the Community to recuperate, she said; a few had stayed on to help in the Work. And several of them had fallen in love with the idealistic young and not-so-young women who, like Yuki, had been drawn there ostensibly by God but probably more because of their own ambiguous reasons, to assist Madame Marie. One young woman had insisted on marrying one who also had the unfortunate compulsion of unbuttoning his fly in public. She had had several children by him before they had separated, and now she bitterly blamed the Community for the outcome. Another young woman had mar-

## THE CARLETON MISCELLANY

ried one who had stopped drinking for two years. On their wedding night, he began drinking again and had not stopped since. That was seven children ago, and she still remained with him, although he had beaten her regularly and although she had had to work all these years as a waitress to support the family. "If I don't love him, who will?" Madame Marie quoted her as saying, and Yuki had been moved to tears. In contrast, there was the wise virgin who, immediately upon realizing that she was coming to regard an alcoholic with unseemly tenderness, had decided to leave the Zualet Community. Now she was leading a happy and useful life with a group of Catholic laywomen.

Madame Marie was trying to dissuade her from marrying Marco, Yuki knew. "But if I give him up, won't that be suffering, too?" she couldn't help asking. Suddenly, Madame Marie shook her head and looked away. "You'll never know how I suffered," she said, "You'll never know . . ." Then Yuki remembered Madame Marie's published autobiography, the book that had changed her whole life and brought her all the way across the country, in which she had told of the origins of the Zualet Community, of her meeting with René Zualet, the Basque scholar-farmer (now dead), who had eventually talked her into establishing this Catholic lay community where all would live together in Christian love and voluntary poverty, working on the land and studying together, accepting all who came because they had nowhere else to go — the alcoholics, the laicized priests, the mentally disturbed, the physically-handicapped, the unwed mothers, the rejected Trappists, the senile, the offscouring of the world — as Ambassadors of Christ. As a young woman, Madame Marie (then Marie Chavy, a carefree Greenwich Village refugee from a convent school) had lived with a man whom she loved very much. One day, while she was sitting alone on a bench in Central Park, eating a lunch of crackers and cheese, a pigeon (a dove sent from God?) had alighted on her shoulder, and she had experienced, over and above her earthly contentment, an illumination which had convinced her that man had been placed here upon this spinning globe to love and honor the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Her lover, a confirmed agnostic, had refused to marry her in the Church. So she had no choice but to leave him. And her autobiography had admitted that it had been many, many anguished nights before she had stopped yearning for the consolation of his arms.

So Yuki continued to bleed and confine herself to her room. Madame Marie sent in irrepressible Brigid McGinty, who, with her extravagant Brooklyn-Irish judgments of other members of the Community, could always make Yuki laugh, to cheer her up, but Yuki only succeeded in depressing Brigid McGinty. How could she possibly tell her? And she prayed and prayed, how she prayed, remembering how a woman had been healed of a discharge of years, merely by touching, in complete faith, the hem of Christ's robe. The bleeding stopped on August 5, on the Feast of Our Lady of Snows, which Madame Marie had appointed Yuki's feast day when she had learned that Yuki was the Japanese word for snow. Yuki presumptuously and gratefully accepted this miracle as a feast day gift from God.

She was able then to resume baking bread for the Community, eight loaves a day, but whether because Grace had totally deserted her (bread must be kneaded and baked with *caritas*, or it just won't come out right) or because Madame Marie or somebody had decided to try the heavier whole wheat flour from a nearby organic farm, Yuki removed from the oven batch after batch of wheaten bricks which could have been used for the new chapel Madame Marie had her heart set on building. Once she had been able to bring forth such loaves that someone had remarked, "Say, this is better than cake!"

And Marco became jealous of Chic, a new member of the Community, fresh from serving a term for forgery, who had enthusiastically taken over the cooking. His imagination and his remembrances of his own irregular life as a seaman had created a lively side romance, and his accusations had left Yuki miserable and helpless.

But some of the early weeks had been beautiful, before anyone had suspected that there was the least attachment between



this tall Italian seaman from Worcester, Mass., this Marco Cimarusti, who had come to the Community to recover after a bender, and this plain-faced Japanese girl who had been such a serious and devout member of the Community for two years. He was completely sober then, for almost a month, and there were stolen kisses in the morning, the joy of making piles of whole wheat toast for the breakfast table together, and the bittersweet of trying to say goodnight at curfew, loath to leave one another.

One day, when Marco was well and ready to leave the Community, he had gone out to the Battery to see if he could get a seasonal job as engineer on the *S.S. Hudson Belle*, one of the Summer excursion boats which twice daily carries tourists and vacationers from such points as the Battery, Yonkers, Jersey City, Elizabeth, and Bayonne, to crowded Rockaway Beach and back, and which even schedules special moonlight dances and showboat cruises on certain nights. Madame Marie had given Yuki leave to go over to the Battery to wait with him till the boat got back in. His seaman friend Manuel, a Negro from Baltimore, who was a steward on the liner *America*, was with him, too, and the trio had sat there on a bench and talked about the warm weather. Meanwhile, a car crashed into a pole nearby and the police discovered it was driven by a couple of men from Seamen's House who had kidnaped a woman tourist, stolen her car, and kept her captive drunk in the rear seat. And in the playground, a little girl was hurt on the concrete, so the police were tending to that, too. Yuki was rather dazed by everything. She and Marco went over to get some coffee and doughnuts across the street, and they came back to sit there in the hot sun on a Battery Park bench, sipping from paper cups and watching the pigeons, waiting for the *S.S. Hudson Belle* to come in, waiting for the *Robert E. Lee*. Manuel was at the scene of the auto accident. When the boat came in, they gladly took Marco on; he waved goodbye from the gangplank, and Yuki noticed that he sure could have used a haircut.

Then Manuel and Yuki talked a bit. "I've knowed that man



for five years," said Manuel. "He's my best friend, I guess. But the way he is, when he's drinking, you can't trust him with a quarter to go across the street and come back with a loaf of bread."

Well, to get back to Yuki's wedding day—several trolleys went by and curious passengers stared at this small Oriental girl wearing a blue-printed cotton dirndl and embroidered nylon blouse (the clothes that a generous visitor to the Community had taken off her back and given to Yuki, just because she had commented on how pretty they looked, had been her wedding dress), cradling on her lap the head of this mould of man, big-boned and hardy-handsome.

O bright unhappiness. O shining sorrow. Why this man? Yuki could not understand why she loved him. Because he represented all the courage, moral and physical, which she had always felt she lacked (she was afraid of elevators; she had never had the nerve to learn how to drive a car)? Because in spite of all he had been through (wounded three times in the recent war, he wore a good-sized crater just below his left rib), he retained an enormous vitality? "It's the physical attraction," Madame Marie had said. "He has a gift for work that not many are given. See how he spades the ground out there, with such ease, such grace. Oh, he is wonderfully made!"

Yuki remembered the bull sessions back in San Francisco. After Topaz, as soon as California had permitted the return of the Japanese, her father had resumed his former occupation as a gardener, and she had become chief cook and bottle-washer for a small Japanese daily which printed one page of English and three pages of Japanese. She was allowed a weekly column in which she was free to write as she pleased; this had attracted a bunch of somewhat younger companions who all dreamed of one day writing the Great Nisei Novel, and they had talked of everything under the sun, mostly trying to analyze one another. Sometimes Yuki had been the one under the floodlight of their probing, and sometimes she had been made very uncomfortable,

mostly because she was unmarried at 31 and did not appear particularly anxious to perpetuate an alliance with any male.

"What are you, anyway, a Lesbian?" someone had finally asked.

Yuki laughed. "No, I'd like to get married someday."

"Well, what kind of guy does it have to be? You sure must be particular."

"I read a poem by e.e. cummings once," said Yuki.

*. . . lady through whose profound and fragile lips the sweet  
small clumsy feet of April came into the ragged meadow of  
my soul.*

If someone would say such a thing to me, I'd melt. That would be the end of my spinsterhood!"

"Do you know something? You're nothing but a shopgirl at heart. 'Lady through whose profound and fragile lips . . .' Sheer corn!"

(Then was this the why of her total response to Marco — because she sensed that if he had been a poet, he would have confirmed those gratifying lines? But there was no need for poetry; the mere thought of Marco was enough to make her bowels as molten wax. Not that he was exactly the inarticulate man, when it came to recounting his sailing and drinking adventures. But then neither did Marco comprehend why he had chosen her, after so many other women, some of them breathtakingly beautiful, had indicated their willingness to marry him at a moment's notice. As one member of the Community had observed, Marco was the type of man who should have been driving a Cadillac convertible, that expensive wristwatch glinting in the sunlight as he impatiently drummed his left hand on the outside of the door, waiting for the light to change — with, yes, some golden-haired goddess by his side. Yet, looking into Yuki's plain brown face, he would say in puzzlement, "I can't understand it. It's like you've got a rope tied around my neck that won't let go." Or, "If I had a million dollars, I'd just sit here all day long and just look at you!")

Yuki had shrugged. "You're a snob. What's so wrong about being a shopgirl? Don't they come under human beings?"

But it was not only these friends that wondered about Yuki. Her mother had sighed over her. "*Komaru-ne* . . . what a worry you are. What's wrong with Michio-san? He's such a fine boy. He would make a good husband. College education and everything, and a good job as a draftsman for the City." And she would point up the model of her young brother Taro, a moderately successful insurance salesman, who had early married a suitable and sweet girl and had already presented her with two splendid grandchildren.

"Mama, don't worry about me. It's just that I feel in my heart that there are some things I have to do first, before I start having children and settling down."

Her father would side with her. "Leave her alone, Mama. She's happy, she's healthy. What more do you want?"

Usually, each time her mother got onto the subject, Yuki could not help smiling. It always reminded her of the lyric of the mother's fretting in a novel called *The Time of Man*: "Where's the fellows that ought to be a-comen? . . . A big brown girl, nigh to eighteen, and no fellows a-comen!" A couple of times, the echo in her mind of this singsong plaint, "Where's the fellows that ought to be a-comen?" had made her burst out giggling, and her mother, who saw not a whit of levity concerning the matter at hand, had looked very much pained.

One day, however, Yuki had been feeling out of sorts when her mother began on this perpetual theme.

"Maybe I'm a *katawa*, Mama," she had answered tartly. "Nothing but a freak."

Her mother had fiercely denied such a possibility. "You're not a *katawa*! How can you say such a thing? The midwife said you were one of the most perfectly formed babies she'd ever seen!"

Poor Mama. Now what would her mother say? She had been distressed enough when Yuki had announced that she was going to New York, and on such a bewildering mission. She had been

absolutely dismayed when Yuki had later written to say that she had begun taking Catholic instruction. But Yuki had for some reason never got around to being baptized. For one thing, to reject Buddhism entirely and to accept the Catholic theory that, as heathens, the most that good Buddhists could hope for was not the Heaven where God, dazzling in all His glory, would be met face-to-face, but merely a Natural Heaven called Limbo, where only a profane serenity awaited — this would be equivalent to rejecting her mother and father, and Yuki could not bring herself to cause this irreparable cleavage. For the time being, she consoled herself that she was in her heart a Catholic, through what Fr. McGillicuddy had described as the “baptism of desire.”

Sooner or later, her mother would have to learn that her daughter had married an alcoholic, and a *bakujin* (white) alcoholic, at that. Suddenly, Yuki could not see ahead at all, because she did not care to contemplate either the suffering she would have to inflict or that she herself would doubtless have to undergo. She was leaving the Community tomorrow on the advice of Madame Marie, who wanted her to consult her family before coming to any decision about Marco. She would, of course, be unable to confess today's marriage to Madame Marie ( I will write later and explain, she promised herself). Marco will join me in another week or so after he accumulates enough bus fare. After another drinking bout, he had been ousted from the engine room and was now, black bow tie and all, a waiter on the *Hudson Belle*.

Finally, Marco came to enough so that the newlyweds could catch the trolley to their own stop. He promptly bought a bottle at the village liquor store, and they had to take the taxi back to the Community.

On the way, with Marco slumped heavily against her, Yuki kept remembering Hopkins. Perhaps she wanted to believe that this was a sign from God (*it is a wicked and unfaithful generation that asks for a sign*) that this was the way He meant it to be:

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed . . .*

*. . . And though the last lights of the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.*

Anyway, she could not think of an epithalamium that she would more prefer, Hopkins permitting. Incidentally, this morning at Mass, Fr. McGillicuddy had worn red vestments. It was the Feast Day of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, and in this connection there always came to her mind that very last, that devastating line of Flaubert's *Herodias*, about Iakokan's severed head: "As it was very heavy, they carried it alternately." The missal had also noted that it was the commemoration of St. Sabina, a Roman widow who had been converted by a maid-servant, beheaded under the Emperor Hadrian, and secretly buried. A church had been built on the site of her home on the Aventine in 425. Considered a gem of basilical architecture, it was used as the station on Ash Wednesday. However, the missal had added, it was not certain whether such a woman had existed at all.

● WILLIAM JAY SMITH

PEN SKETCH

Heroic reader, let us if we can  
Invoke with bold pen-strokes heroic man.

A seedy cornstalk bending in the South,  
A pipestem dangles from the tight-set mouth.

The ear is a hollow gourd; the bulbous nose,  
A beet-red senator devoid of clothes.

The pumpkin face is blank; the ready hand  
Would turn a cool oasis back to sand.

And last, the eyes: dim craters, glaucous pools  
Where slow hate boils, and lust, recoiling, cools;

Rush-rounded brinks where blunt thoughts seldom stir;  
The hat sits squarely, lifts . . . Good morning, Sir!



THE WOMAN ON THE PORCH

A woman in my dream sits on a cool front porch,  
And there, through the declining afternoon,  
Weaves within her mind the threads of my story,  
Calling the characters in from the shadows.

Soon, weary of conjuring,  
As if this light, half-light,  
Were in itself too great  
To bear, and she were drawn onstage  
Before the most receptive of audiences,  
She leaves behind my half-completed story,  
And walks across the green  
Front lawn to the flowerbeds.

Bending above them,  
Her eye catching the sun's last flames,  
She says: "Flowers are children; when  
I see them I want to know their names . . ."

And the flowers answer  
And identify themselves—  
Rose, carnation, sunflower, camellia,

While night comes down within my dream upon the world,  
And the sky, for a brief moment, is the color of currant and  
quince.

● AMBROSE GORDON, JR.

AUGUST AT WELLFLEET

Barnacles in the branches, while underfoot  
The slop of the eternal sea against a stone  
Possess the deckchair dallier's mind. His weary eyes  
Goggled and fabulous, revolving inward, find  
After this morning's endless game of chess, the clams, a can of  
ale  
The flux and reflux of a summer seaside afternoon.

And so he drops off, drifts far away . . .  
To sink full fathom five, and swirl  
Untented in the wide whale's acre  
Where all living movement quickens as the light how gently,  
Softly and silently thickens and dims,  
Merging into the boom of a sunken surf.

But now  
From somewhere near at hand, behold! thin shadows  
Of lost ships and severed seabells call and beckon  
Him, pale loiterer of the botton, who caught up among  
The swaying tentacles of a giant squid, hears  
Or thinks he hears,  
"Grey human oyster, swing your partner, come!"  
He struggles, weighted down, to join the dance.

Yet vaguely knows this music stretched about him  
Was never of the spheres, nor even  
A hornpipe skirled in Davy Jones's locker.  
The horns were not the wreathed horns of Triton  
— Of Buick rather, M.G., Packard, Chevrolet,  
His daughter homebound with a dozen beaux or brother.  
And knows, importantly, that cocktails still await him  
With the Alice Murphys or the Isabella Joneses,  
To be followed by a drive, live lobsters, or a full shore dinner.

## THE ENTREPRENEUR

By LLOYD ZIMPEL

Prosney was a youth of good conscience, due to his early religious training. "I know the difference between right and wrong," he would boast to the lizardous young men in leather jackets whom he found in the bars around his neighborhood, suggesting that the judge who had so strongly submitted that he didn't by giving him one to three on car boosting a few years back, was batty himself. That happened to be Prosney's first and so far only adult rap, taken at eighteen on the nose—not that the pen was much different from the boys' farm and two training schools, in each of which he had sat out from two to nineteen months of his adolescence. The religion soaked in during one long honest stretch between his ninth and fourteenth years, spent with a hard-jawed aunt in San Francisco. His first year under her thumb was the last he heard from his father in southern Indiana: "Aunty is a good religious person. Mind her like you would me. Your mother would want it. I know." Prosney—dutiful son and nephew—minded.

"But it's like I sort of slipped away from the whole business when they busted me for breaking windows," he told the psychologist just before he got out on the car rap. "I wasn't the right sort of personality for it, you might say." With this insight the psychologist found no fault: out Prosney came, all but twenty-one and when things went bad still remembered the religion he forgot when times were good.

They had never been better. He hit town loaded with money-making ideas which he dropped in the tenderloin nightspots before the indifferent long-haired youths who had more violent pursuits in mind if not on tap. These cool fellows had not much time for him—small and skinny Prosney with the bristly, mousey hair and air of a fox terrier half-mad with eagerness to be on with something. They were men of solid middle-class imaginations—stolen and sold cars, backdoor break-ins—and they had no

patience with the ends Prosney's fancy led him to—selling punch boards on the street once he had left the halfass parole job of pumping gas for the Shell Oil Company.

Olson, the skeletal blond who favored Cary's Hen House above the other neighborhood taverns for his endless playing of pinball machines—their ratchety ding-dong the only sound to flavor the blue atmosphere of the Hen House when the afternoon sun filtered through blue glass windows—Olson, helpful Olson, one day explained what the trouble was: "Man, nobody says it's anything wrong selling punchboards, but if you're on the make, I mean, *be* on it, you know?"

Pondering this advice over his own warm beer in the blue tavern, Prosney fell to counting his blessings and measuring where they came short of his ambition. How much of Olson's advice did he need to take? Well, he wanted what every man wanted: peace of mind in all its manifestations; money in the pocket, a big car, a broad acquaintanceship among the girlies, afternoons free to see the horses, evenings to pal around with the big men in the expensive Broadway hangouts, mornings to sleep. Then he asked himself what he had, and his answer only discouraged him: what more than a two-week supply of punchboards on consignment from the upper Market novelty house, and not money enough to get a week ahead on his room bill? Also, he was sick of meat loaf in Compton's and wanted once in a while a spectacular steak. There it was, the old insight working again.

"By God, you're right!" he cried into Olson's face, which looked down at him with bleared eyes benignly blank from already having forgotten what it might be that he was for once right about.

The rest of that warm December day, Prosney drank his blue beer while fat, glum Cary himself read mens' magazines behind the bar. Only a half dozen customers disturbed their peace, and Prosney gave these no more than his briefest glance, sizing each up as a punchboard prospect. The two that were still on hand when he got ready to leave he approached in his boldest man-

ner. "Sell the chances to your friends," he said to a man who looked as if he had none. "Make good money. It costs you two bucks, you get back seven-fifty."

While the uncomfortable man sat with his purchase gingerly in hand, Prosney saluted Cary in farewell and went into the street, the change from his last smalltime punchboard sale in his pocket and a full-blown lovely money-making notion in his head.

In the early morning a half-hour before the Hen House closed he was back, tenting inside a huge dirty trench coat and leaning over the bar with a sly grin while he waited for a chance to have a word with Cary, busy at the booths.

"Well, *I'm* in the business now, too," he told Cary, one entrepreneur to another.

The owner looked up from rinsing glasses and into Prosney's cunning smile. "You are, huh?" he said without inquiring further, as if the vast trench coat with its lumpy bulges and catsup stain on the sleeve told him all he needed to know.

"That's a fact," Prosney said, and with a wise wink made a zero sign out of his thumb and forefinger.

"Zero is right," Cary said indifferently.

At two o'clock when the law required Cary to turn his last customers out—three lost-looking young men who had come down from the Y for a desperate evening—Prosney was waiting for them on the sidewalk. "Shame to knock off so early, fellows," he said. "Maybe you're in the market for another drink?"

One of the three suspiciously took him in through rimless glasses. "We might be at that," he said, seeing no harm in a youngster as lumpy as a sockful of potatoes.

Prosney motioned them into the next doorway. They made an interested, puzzled audience as they grouped in front of him and watched amazed as he unbuttoned the top button of his trench coat and, like a magician new at the game, plunged a hand into the ragged tear in the lining and withdrew an amber pint bottle.

"Whiskey!" he said triumphantly.

With his other hand he reached into the other side of the lining.

"Gin!"

With both bottles in one hand, he picked up the tail of the trench coat and slid his arm up the elbow inside the lining.

"Scotch!" he said; and after further fumbling in the coat tail; "Vodka!"

He served up three quick whiskeys in a telescopic plastic cup, collected three dollars including the surcharge for the risk in "operating afterhours without the payoff," as he put it, and while his three customers stood with fiery mouths took himself to the all-night eatery in the next block.

Into the scorched grease yellow air he strolled with a smile of anticipation on his terrier's face. Clinking as he walked, he passed from booth to booth to spot the individuals with likely faces. At the very end a man with graying crew-cut hair sat alone, slowly eating fried eggs. Prosney slid in across from him and, bold with his easy success on the street, wasted no words: "Hi. Thirsty?"

"Huh?"

"Interested in a drink?" Prosney smiled his best salesman's smile.

"A drink you say?"

"That's right." He began hauling out bottles. "Gin; this here's whiskey—"

With the scotch half out he glanced at the man's face and at once stopped. He'd seen that come-with-me-buddy look more often than he cared to think.

"Never mind, my mistake," he said softly, still smiling, and quickly slipped the bottles back into the lining as he rose to leave.

"Hold it a second," the man said, but Prosney was already leaping for the door while the man with yolk on his lips and fork still in hand ran after.

Out the door went Prosney, a bear-like bundle in his dirty coat with the bottles smacking together inside the lining. Like a



man in terrible pain, he ran half doubled, trying both to make good time and still hold the bottles close to his body so they wouldn't smash. His three first and only customers still stood where he had left them; they watched him coming, then looked beyond to the fellow yelling: "Grab that guy there! Hold him—"

Prosney scurried by, hugging himself. "Don't pay any attention," he said in passing. The three men turned to watch him go, and the cop, by this time rid of his fork, had a few foul words for them as he came by. Just beyond the three he did a sharp turn into the alley behind the Hen House where Prosney, with a clink and clatter, had disappeared.

On familiar ground here, Prosney stepped spiritedly along the damp dark brick between garbage cans and piles of fog-dampened cardboard boxes. By now he had all but one of the bottles under his arm; the last one still dragged down the left tail of his coat, swinging it wide whenever he turned. When he angled swiftly into a narrow passage between two buildings the bottle smashed against a wall. Broken glass tinkled in the coat-tail. He heard the cop, who had been floundering among paper bags full of rotting lettuce, suddenly get on his trail again.

At the rear of the three-story building a half block down from the Hen House, Prosney found the fire-escape he was looking for and he leaped up its metal-slatted steps and past shaded windows to the roof. Across the asphalt and scratchy gravel surface he ran toward the roof of the adjoining building. He was soaked with sweat, strapped into the big coat as he was and with all the effort it took to hang onto the bottles.

Awkwardly, he heaved himself over the three-foot wall between the buildings, took one step forward, heard the sharp crack of the glass he stood on and tried in the same instant of hearing to draw his foot back. It was too late altogether. Down he went, through the roof-flush skylight of painted glass, arms and legs spread out from the big canvas-colored bundle of his coat, and broken glass all around. Twelve feet below he hit, smacking to rest on the landing of a stairway between the sec-

ond story apartments and the third. Glass cracked over and around him and beneath him too, as the bottles smashed and the liquor soaked into his coat. His spine, if not broken, had at least been forever jammed up into his brain.

Bleeding and bent, wiping liquor, sweat and blood out of his eyes, he stumbled down the stairs to the street; and with a lopsided lope from the pain in his rear, trench coat flapping and tinkling, traveled up the sidewalk past the three customers—they'd moved hardly a foot since he'd seen them last—and didn't stop running till he was back in his room on O'Farrell. Here, from a crusted bottle left by the previous tenant, he painted iodine onto a dozen cuts front and back. "You got to watch out for me better than that," he said wearily to the sour air in his room, and laid himself down like a man with boils.

With his stiffness mostly gone, the greater number of his cuts healed and the bundle of broken glass in his trench coat long since sent down the backstairs chute to the incinerator (he hoped), Prosney one midnight came back to the Hen House. Three nights away and no one had missed him.

"How's business," Cary asked as if he already knew. Prosney only shrugged. An important matter occupied his brain, the success of which would more than offset any setback of the last few days. The punchboards he still carried were only a subterfuge, not part of the plan he was cleverly rehearsing before Cary's blue-tinged mirrors.

"Set me up with a brew, okay Cary? I'm strapped this week."

"This week and next," said Cary, turning his hog-jowled face in another direction.

"Give you a board at wholesale."

"Worth nothing to me."

"You got an awful hard nose, Cary."

"Sure I have," he said. "We all got troubles."

With a mean look Prosney hauled out his half-dollar and rang it against the draft tap. "I could have gone somewheres else," he warned Cary, and added to himself—"but I want the satisfaction."

"I know that," Cary said, drawing him the usual.

He went back to watch Olson and some North Beach thug slamming at the pinball machine. They ignored him—that was all right with Prosney. While they did and while Cary turned magazine pages with a wet thumb, he eased himself through the half-opened door to the back room. Nothing there in the dark but stacks of hard cardboard beer cases and wooden whiskey ones. He made a spot for himself behind one tall stack of blend and settled in the dark to wait. Next to him was the door from the alley. He touched the padlock, big as his first. A draft came from somewhere above it, he felt it on his neck. Someone in the apartment overhead walked creaking on the floor.

When the sound of the pinball machine stopped, he heard Olson and his friend leave, the draft on his neck broadening when they opened the front door. Old fat Cary moved around to the clink of glasses and bottles. His footsteps padded toward the back room. While Prosney flattened, the light came on, went off; in the few moments that it was lighted Prosney memorized every grain in the rough pine of the whiskey case his face was pressed against.

With the broom he'd come to get, Cary swept. He'd left the door open, the shaft of dusty light all but touching Prosney's shoe tips; and Prosney listened with a thoughtful frown to the sound of the worn bristles on the spit-stained floor. Now that the street-noise had died to its early morning muteness, there wasn't anything a man couldn't hear if he listened hard enough.

Cary's shadow blocked the light; the broom clattered to the back room's floor; he'd missed the hook; with a grunt he bent, got the broom, hung it up and shut the door. It was good and dark again and Prosney eased out of his corner as the cash register rang. Ten minutes of silence while the floor boards creaked from time to time, then the front door opened and the draft blew merrily down Prosney's neck. When it stopped, he felt his way along the cases to the door.

Dark blue light made a whale-like shadow of the bar. The flashing O in the Wash-O-Mat sign on the self-service laundry

across the street lighted for one out of every three seconds the cash register's bright finish. Prosney crossed past the black blocks of booths where salt cellars popped out of the shadows each time the laundry light caught them. Behind the bar where whiskey glinted blue in its bottles, the worn slats of the wooden run-way, bowed by Cary's weight, gave spring to Prosney's cautious step.

He drew himself a beer, almost all foam, and drank it down. Another one; and he leaned toward the cash register, the drawer open and empty — but he wasn't that easily fooled. Where was that box, that green metal one that Cary kept his cash in?

He struck a match and immediately the little paper flame blossomed in the mirror: thrown to the window it reflected blue, like a giant Christmas bulb. With one startled stroke of his arm he whipped the flame out, and blew softly from pursed lips as he cocked an ear for the sound of anyone who had spotted it. Nothing, except the purr of a single car cruising by and a motorcycle gunning somewhere down the block.

Down the back bar, with its mirror and shelf of bottles, he moved in a crouch, opening the sliding doors. He started from where he had once seen Cary put the box, back behind the thick liqueurs ordered by hardly anyone and the cigarette cartons—he took as many packs as his pocket would hold. It didn't surprise him not to find it. From door to sliding door he went, feeling back into the black depth of each shelf the length of his arm, and never knowing what he had until he brought it out into what light there was. At the fifth shelf he thought he had what he was looking for, until one flash of the O showed him nothing more than a foil-wrapped gift box of creme de something.

He was nearly down to the end of the back bar near the window before his fingers felt over the noisy cellophane of peanut bags to touch the cool metal of the cash box. He slid it out over the peanuts—it was heavier than he would have thought — and heard the happy sound of rolled coins pushing the bundles of bills inside. The hasp was flat, locked tight. Well, he could put

a chisel to that easily enough. And wouldn't old Cary be surprised.

Cash box in hand he rose and in the instant of his rising heard a tiny, almost inaudible click at the door: before he ducked again behind the bar and ran stooping on the wooden slats that sprang and slapped loudly behind him, he saw the unnerving sight of a moving shadow, just darker than the blue glass and blotting out the bottom half of the neon O, moving ominously at the door.

The damn match did it, he told himself. In the back room, holding his breath, he all but closed the door, and with nowhere else to go turned into the same corner behind the same stack of whiskey cases; the cash box pressed cool between the shirt over his belly, the pocketful of cigarettes like a giant tumor on his thigh, and the draft from the back door's crack once more breathing coldly down his neck—all the more coldly as the front door opened and stayed open.

When he breathlessly peeped from around the wooden cases he saw a thread of light in the room's total black—the beam of a flashlight exploring the bar: seeing that, he knew he'd been best off when he stuck to punchboards, no matter what Olson said. With nothing to lose by it now, he began thoughtfully to pray.

"Okay fella. Come on out!" commanded the voice with the flashlight, still somewhere in the bar but close enough to hear his mumbling.

Prosney, his heart set on a miracle, didn't answer, and the voice repeated its demand of doom just once more before the door crashed open and the sharp white light played over his ankles and feet which stuck from behind the cases as he knelt. On the tightly shut lids of his eyes he saw the light, but kept talking all the same, breathing out the last of his faith right along with the last of his hope.

A hand hard and calloused from steering motorcycles grabbed his arm and pulled him to his feet. "What're you up to, buddy?"

LLOYD ZIMPEL

Prosney, hang-dog, turned his eyes to the side. "Just prayin'," he said sadly.

"Praying?"

"I was praying if you wouldn't catch me, I'd put the box back." He thrust the cash box to the officer as if he had merely been holding it for him as a reluctant favor.

"Well, I'll be damned—"

"Not as much as me," said Prosney, brushing off his knees.

● CONRAD HILBERRY

THE LAST DAY

You know it when around the street's bend  
Gorgeous with  
Garbage  
The trucks move, end to end,

Leavings fermenting ripe and sweet,  
Husk, rind,  
Shell, bone,  
Brown cabbage fragrant as meat.

And there on the running board rides a man  
With cigar among molars,  
Cocky as the moon,  
His pail clanging like church-bells on the stinking van.



## THE DUET

by H. E. F. DONOHUE

It is terribly essential, then, she eventually surmised, that I not begin, for even the slightest much as even part of a whimper, to cry. Particularly about nothing in particular. Grown women twenty-three do not cry about nothing in particular alone with an infant on an autumn night. Oh yes they do. Well I won't. I've got responsibilities to maintain. And a house to run. And a little boy to entertain besides. She looked down upon him.

He sat securely in the center of his universe, a true Ptolemaean, where all his joys were within easy reach and each a part, an extension of him. She was the sun and the moon and all the stars. The slim wooden bars of his playpen were lean trees bracing his estate; the warped plywood platform floor, his patio. Occupation: toy-thrower. He lobbed them out and she tossed them back in. Then, when, now and then, anything threatened him, he had only to lift his head at her and smile for a smile, if he cared to, and tried.

She sat close by outside the pen on the rickety piano bench which her perceptive husband, promising Instructor of Lit in the College (not to mention the choice section of Graduate English 101), had promised he would repair. Goddam the College and the graduate school and the whole goddam university she reminded herself as she tossed the rubber duck back in, the fearful rubber duck with its garish jacket, an obscene blue, and its flat pat wide yellow bill hiding that awful whistle that wheezed at the slightest touch like an old man dying. And there on each side of its bulging head leered an insane white button of an eye, rocking, mocking, ready from within its thin glassine socket to rove. Nonsense, she told herself shuddering. She shook her head and reached for a plastic letter block, letter "L," and threw it in. She saw it fall. She saw herself reach for another. She saw herself throw that one in. She saw herself seeing herself seen. I am caught, she thought, by the terrible idea that this gesture—

she held a third block poised — is the whole point of my life. She let her hand drop. My whole life. She let the block fall to the floor beside her toes. *But*, she counseled herself earnestly, I am too young to fade away, thus, and die.

He heaved the old tennis ball up and watched it carom against the bars and bounce around circling him.

Consider it, she told herself: Yes. The duck decoyed so it can be chewed by the kiddies. The world is eating itself up. Or that music roller plonking out the same senseless tune. Or that clear plastic ball, his crystal the future to foretell, half-filled with dingy water (Can it possibly be gin!) in which a smoky old red fish floats, also idiotically half-filled with — What? Vodka? A little old Volga fish, eh? Certainly it is rude. Ho. Ho. Ho.

Her son abandoned the ball and threw out his pink pacifier instead. She watched its soiled blue ribbon sail through the air, a tired pennant, a zany meteor. He throws *that* out, she felt, because he's so sure I'll throw it back in. Shall I? Why did I ever start him on it? Why was I afraid? What was so goddam important in my life that I could not take the time to be afraid? Good Dr. Spock says — To hell with Dr. Spock. I'd have rather gone on nursing him forever. Like those native women who get knocked down by their grown kids going for the tit, huh? More nonsense, she told herself. She picked up the pacifier and threw it back in. The ten-month-old gathered it to him happily.

Yes, she said silently: Pacifiers for all men. What will it be boys? Simple silencer? Canned wish or only mere support for the second-rate? What do *you* know about the *second-rate*? Well, anyway, I've always been right in there ready to give out with the old fandango, to—What. What. What? Dear. Dear. Dear me. Oh my dear. Her breath threatened to stop. It burned. It burned in her throat. Her head weighed her down. It felt like a heavy old fuzzy balloon. Why this is very funny and strange, she thought, but I think that I am about to lose control. I am thinking of *him*, the "other" man. Oh Goodness Gracious, I've got me a *other* man! Even before I had a first. This is ridiculous.

This is awful. I thought I would never ever think of him this way again.

She rested her head on the railing of the play-pen and closed her eyes, remembering how it had been, how she had felt that one time. She marveled now with shame now how in this great big wide world she had managed to live all her life before in such erotic ignorance. Before I was with him that one time, she told herself relentlessly, my whole pretty life had been one big dumb sin. Now I am not the same girl now. Now I shall go to him, now. Yes. Now I shall go to him run to him fly fly and ask him beg him plead for his help. Yes-yes. Help. Help-help. No No No No No. For you do not really know him, see. Hah! Never even properly introduced! And he cannot even help himself, honey-bunny-bee. He is only the biggest wolf in the whole wooly Mid-West. And there is really no help for you anyhow because there is really not a thing the matter, see. It might have been better if he had knocked you up. Then — Holy cow.

She leaned back carefully, gracefully, as if alerted by a glancing degrading blow, blinking in alien awe at her fierce discoveries. Folding her arms tightly beneath her breasts and pushing her knees together, she turned her head with its coiled bun of black hair on the back of it and touched her temple and then the whole side of her face to the cool wall. Focusing on the window shade, the softly slapping window shade that seemed to flutter in chained staked fear at the approach of night, the frantic shade at the top of the open window across the room, the window that bleakly looked out into the darkening deepening emptiness of the September twilight — she concentrated on the window shade and fighting off the brimming in her eyes, she watched the darkness grow. The large bright living room which she had painted and decorated with bright prints and light draperies, the warm rambling basement flat throughout all its colorful, textured rooms, all were darkening too. Chill and hollow darkness was descending, it seemed to her, upon the whole heartless world. Listen. There. Through the darkening window

wailed the distant sound of fire sirens screaming by eagerly keening hysterical braggadoccio. Someone else is in trouble, she mused. Welcome.

Her son had thrown out everything. The tennis ball he simply had shoved out. But none of the toys were coming back in. He waited. He regarded his knees. He regarded his toes. He curled his toes; he opened them; he made them straight. He looked up. Nothing. Yawn. He swung his arms, brushing his hands across the floor. He regarded his hands, and the back of his hands. For a little while the action of his right wrist interested him. Again he looked up. Above the top rail he could see some of her hair; through the bars under the rail he could see part of her nose. She was leaning against the wall. He got as close to the bars as he could and put his hands up as high as they would go while he was still sitting. Then he leaned his head down and turned it around and up, as if he were sitting on a hearth looking up the chimney. So. Too late. With the slow confident motion of water pouring over an even edge, he pivoted easily on his smooth hip and — releasing one hand in an attempt to break his fall — flipped his legs out from under him and slowly spun around gently banging his shoulder and the side of his head against the wooden bars.

She neither heard nor saw. She was immeshed in severe recall: Who has lied to me so much about everything? And for what? To what end? They didn't really have to. I would have been goody-good because it is all so very foolish after all. There is no help for anything. There is no help for pain. That poet was right after all. Old Side-Beard was quite so right after all. She recited silently:

... for the world which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Yes, she remembered, it did once, too:  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Right, she decided, right, right, right:  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain ...

True, she told herself, true. She prepared a sigh, prepared to accept the full import of the poet's words, when she remembered the words in the poem that went before:

*Ah, love, let us be true*

*To one another*

To whom! she asked herself wildly. To whom! Oh I would I wish I want to be! Oh, I am quite doomed!

He had let the other hand go, and saw that all that he could see of her from where he lay was one dim knee and that was upside down because so was he. He rolled over, got onto all fours, sat back, and rested. Soon he put his hands up on the bars again and knelt straight, hoisting one leg into a spongy genu-flection. He then dragged the other foot up and around to meet it. His hips were a few inches off the floor. When both feet were together he pulled up hard with both hands.

I joined the Navy, she silently hummed, to see the world. Disintegration is all I see, she decided. And of the spiritual. And of the feminine. It is, Me Lords, the feminine who shall be impoverished in this remorselessly feminized world. This sissy world. This world of form and rote and ritual run by bitter hags and their haughty chamberlains. Hotspur is dead because somebody changed his mind. Let his women weep and wail. To no avail. And I? What shall I become? What if not paid mourner for our men. Poor men. Door men. Those not throttled by the terrorists shall be smothered by the queers. Havoc!

His hands were much too close together. So were his feet. His center of gravity sailed by the corner of his coccyx and he began a short uncontrolled arc enhanced by the classical action of his ankles which formed a tight fulcrum, locking together, lifting and twisting him on his snared feet. He fell down. Each after each, with its own distinct yet muffled sound, his shoulder and back and head and hip and left elbow thudded against the play-pen's slatted side. This time he had held on with both hands.

She heard her heart in her ears, oblivious to the rustling below, trying to accept the mysterious parts of the mysterious

universe. I am mysterious too, she knew. And that, she knew, does not help at all. Not at all.

The child opened his eyes to see his left hand gripping a bar quite near his face. His other hand was on the bar next to it. He was sitting down where he had swung and fallen, staring at his left thumb. He moved the far hand, the right hand, two bars further away. He fixed his feet. He moved them apart as he dragged himself around until he was squatting before the bars once more. Where the bars went into the bottom rail in the plywood floor, he braced his feet. This caused a knee to rise up on each side of his chin. He paused after he had arranged himself, considering his knees, first one then the other. Then he began to pull himself up again. Once he tottered, stamping down too hard to catch himself. But he held on. He rested, hanging like a small white gibbon. He continued on up.

That son-of-a-bitch, she thought. He never even called. He does not care. None of them do. Not any man. All they want is the adventure or the triumph or the joke or their turn at the cozy tit. Trophy hunters. Goddam them all. And me. Mimi! Yonder calls my wild Bohemian Beau. Oh, you kiddies from Puccini-land, you had it so easy and slow. *But he must care!* Well, he doesn't. Yes. No. Not for all the power of him and me and his strange woe. Oh, she pleaded, yes-yes he does must please oh! No. Soon, she divined — resigned, I shall expire piteously in foul and wretched fits writhing unnoticed, unhonored, and unloved. Hopelessly she whipped her head about and down low.

Below her widening eyes, reaching over the top rail of the play-pen like a grappling hook hungrily alive, was an infant's groping hand. Another appeared. A pink and blind cobra. It, too, hooked and held on. Wisps of black hair hove to. His head appeared. There were his eyes, cast down; there was his mouth, closed, working; and his nose, drawn tight; there was his whole face — pared, unified by the urgency of his effort. At last he stood upright, swaying and shaky still, but committed, raw, resolute.

Ah, she wanted to cry, Hero Hero Hero.



He looked at her and said something. He pursed his mouth and said something else.

"Ah," she told him happily, "what a wonderful wise guy."

He grinned at the sound of her voice and glanced down behind him at the plywood floor.

She hesitated.

He pranced a few times and almost lost his grip. That stopped that. He looked down in front him to the floor, suddenly open to peril. "Mum?" he asked the floor, testing it. He gazed at her again and smiled. Then, apparently confident once more, he rested his head on a shoulder, bent back, and began to gargle.

She began to chew the inside left rim of her lower lip. He is going to tire very fast now, she figured, and I may give in. I hope I don't. I hope I don't fall for that look. That look. All my life I've been given that look. I got it from my brothers, young and old. From my brilliant bad-book father. And from every single silly boy friend I ever had. Even from my great big dumb sweet husband. Now I am getting it from my own sweet son. What the hell is the matter with me?

He waited to be picked up. He raised his eyebrows at her. Nothing. He lowered them. Again nothing. He smiled. No response. Nor when he frowned. Finally he spoke out: "Rursen-roo," he said.

And all of them, she remembered, wanted the same old thing. What? What was it? Well, it wasn't honest old sex, anyhow.

Again the child tried: "Marsen lubbi kuu," he said, canting his head.

And, she decided, it isn't the dishonest kind, either. Whatever *that* is.

"Gay-gair," he said, as if reminding her of something, panting a little, a serious look on his solemn face.

Dishonest sex, she told herself, must have something to do with power politics. And selling encyclopedias. She stared at her troubled child.

He yelled

She adjusted her bun of fine black hair. She examined her

fingernails, one by one.

He bellowed out a final appeal. Then his face began to disintegrate. His face began to break up into ragged pieces and planes. His brow crumpled. His eyes disappeared. His head, trembling around the vortex of his grinding mouth, turned red.

I'll never make it, she feared. To him she said:

"Who?"

He began to cry.

"Who!" she demanded angrily.

He cried the profound cry of the forsaken, the hopeless cry of one who understands the range of his hopelessness, his disaster, heavy with his arms holding and himself hanging, buffeted by his own sounds, stung by the cold searing wetness of his tears. He cried.

"Who," she insisted, furious with everything.

He cried high and harshly. He cried the cry of fear and sorrow and rage.

"What I want to know is *Who?*" she asked him. "Who is going to save you?"

In one last grand flail he opened both hands and dropped backwards to the floor as if stoned. There he bounced. Then he recoiled, in the air. He bounced again. And rolled. He rolled onto his belly, which had suddenly become tight and full. He arched his back. He lifted his chin. He spread out his legs and feet and arms and fingers and toes, and after having spread his whole being into one taut sheet of stiff points and arching his back, he lifted his chin and closed his eyes and screamed.

"You," she told him quietly. "That's who."

He screamed.

"That's who," she said.

He screamed.

She began to relax. Aculturating agent, hell, she thought. His father should be here to handle this. It is too hard on me.

She watched her son rest his head on one ear. She watched him rolled onto his back and change the scream into a different cry. Soon, she saw, she heard, he would be done.

She turned to look toward the window again. Almost full night now. Even the evening breeze had gone with the last of the light. The window shade was quite still. The stillness of the dark room made the room seem smaller. She flicked on the small piano lamp and the room enlarged immediately. Imagine, she imagined, to live forever in the deep dark with always perfect eyes. Awful. Why awful? Why anything? Why babies and men and fall and spring? She lighted a cigarette and stared at it in her hand. She turned back to her son. Nobody knows, she told him silently, but everyone must try.

He sat up crying still, reminding her of the Chinese child in the picture of the bomb rubble burning with the dead dogs. They all do, she decided. All babies look alike. Not true, she decided. All right.

He stopped crying.

All old people do, she decided. They all look alike. Not true, she decided. Well, some, anyway. And, anyway, all beauty queens do. All beauty queens look alike. True.

He sneezed hard a few times, lashing them out of his head.

She tossed the duck to him. It fell between his feet. With one efficient swipe he swept it away. It bounced and wheezed and whistled foolishly.

The fact of the matter is, she saw as she saw him bang the playpen floor like a drum, sooner or later all babies get to look like Sibelius. Then like themselves.

He reached for the bars and got to his knees and to his feet shifting his hands up the bars moving all the way up after them in a practiced impatient climb, swaying rhythmically from side to side, up, until he was standing straight glaring at her.

She picked him up and sat him on her lap. He was wet.

"Sure you are," she told him. "You're no Martian. Do you know we're as bad off as the Martians because so many weaklings survive?"

He examined her sweater buttons, sniffing.

"Sure you do," she told him. "So let's stay up. Let's sing. Let's stay up and sing. I want you to stay up until your father

H. E. F. DONOHUE

comes home so we can tell him all about it. So let's sing. What shall we sing?"

Rummaging through her life for a song, she came upon—as, while once looking for a racket-press in the country attic the last warm summer week she was fifteen one month after her mother died, she had come upon one of her mother's exquisite long silvery feather fans which had crumbled away in her hands—she came upon another line from Side-Beard's *Dover Beach*:

*"The Sea of Faith was once, too, at the full. . . ."*

She thought about that thought for a while with all its parts spreading out in her mind like parts of an ancient fan. The question was formed. She asked it of herself and shook her head.

"Hey," she asked her son, leaning him back to get a better look at him. "When *was* the Sea of Faith ever at the full?"

He yawned long, crookedly, and leaned back against her.

"Oh," she said, rocking him back and forth. Then she said, "I know what let's sing. Let's sing *Row, Row*. I'll begin."

She sang in a high fragile voice:

*"Row, row, row your boat*

*Gently down the stream. . . . ."*

She sang the round three times. She sang two other rounds she knew, each three times. Then she sang other songs she knew, some of them twice. She sang all the songs she could remember, waiting for her husband to come home so they could tell him all about it.

But her husband did not come home in time, and in time the tired child fell asleep, his dark round bowl of a head at easy rest in the warm and gentle bend of her softly curved arm beside and below the soft smooth curve of her warm soft breast. After he had gone off fast and sound she cried quietly a little about everything.

● IRVING FELDMAN

ASSIMILATION

I dreamt the other night I was in Heaven,  
That I rose up like a sundae with leaven.  
I was there in the Old Folks Home playing pinochle and checkers  
And up above us is a picture of Old Abe who fried the neggers.  
Everything is free and grade-A, and I turn over my card.  
It says, "What's good for Ford is good for God."  
And all the boys are gathered sitting around the Televidge,  
Clear as day you can see God's own image.  
He talks sweet and low and he looks like Ed Murrow,  
The music's by Gilbert and Ed Sullivan; then it all goes blurro.  
And Maxie whispers, "He's Self-Sponsored, Self-Applauded,  
Self-Rated,  
One and Almighty. It's a quality show and never out-dated."  
"Haha," I say, "Boy, that's rich!"  
"Shhh," says Bennie, "He owns half of Miami Bich."  
But I figure I'll unload 'cause the market looks too bullish.  
But Barney whispers, "Don't do nothing fullish!"  
So I hang on and buy till the ticker goes screwy  
And I'm 10 million bucks ahead and the bears are all blooey.  
The sky's full of stars going around in their tracks like at  
Grauman's Chinese  
And they start handing out autographed menus from Lindy's,  
The guys 're all drunk and there are B-girls and bagels  
And free silver dollars straight from Las Vegas  
And Bella grabbed me and said, "Hey, we're all angels!"  
But I'm worried, why does Mr. Mortie have to run after the  
models?  
Can't he stick to his dressmaker's dummy and keep out of the  
Catskills?  
That buyer from Phillie! That union contract! O, I wanna scream,  
Halp!  
Seventh Avenue's waiting for my scalp.

IRVING FELDMAN

But Gimbels takes a thousand and Macy's takes ten and then its  
bam!

And I buy Rausye a mink for her old persion lamb.  
And Grossingers was giving a banquet at Woolwoits  
And Sollie was laughing it up trying on the skoits,  
And Albie said, "Moishie's under the Boardwalk gettin' laid."  
And Sadie said, "Come on, let's go sit in the shade."  
And Marvin sank a heaver and Joey hooked from the side,  
Then Creepie drove in for a lay-up while the other guys cried.  
And Bernie pulled a mouse-trap and Skinnie's pass hit the mark,  
And forever and ever the Mighty Babe stood swatting 'em outta  
the park.

Then after the spelling-bee we have a map-drawing contest  
Of the United States and teacher says mine's the best.  
But Sidney and me, we snuck into the Loews  
And this guy sits down and starts tickling our knees.  
And I say, "Leave us alone, mister," and he says, "Say please."  
And then he says, "Wanna see the scar under my kiltie?"  
And I look and o my god it's Uncle Miltie!  
And they all think the Lone Ranger is really a crook,  
And on the street papa says Hello to Mr. Bashook.  
Then the kids all pile in and we start throwing rocks.  
On the radio Uncle Moe says, "Irving, there's a present in the  
icebox."

O god, I feel all soft and I wanna cry and twitch.  
There's a card, it says, "For your throat, a thirty-year itch."  
And there's a can the size of a man, and mama's in it!  
"Mama," I cry, "I found you again!" "Don't talk," says she, "itt!"  
And I'm standing in my crib and I say, "Papa, buy me a tri-cycle."  
And he spreads his wings and smiles like the American Ikele.  
And it's always dark and everything's free and you never hear No.  
But I can't breathe and think I'll drown in the stuff and no-  
body'll know.

And I wake up kicking and screaming, Lemme go! Lemme go!



# SINKING AS AN ART, IN & OUT OF ENGLISH DEPTS.

ICARUS

*a fable*

by JACOB ZILBER

Ladies—gentlemen—if you'll all watch closely today, I think you'll see something that you've never seen before. Why, for example, am I now ascending slowly but persistently toward the ceiling?

Tomorrow you have your exam. But today we have the naming of poems.

Yes, I'm bumping up here against the ceiling, lonely as a cloud. But do you have any serious questions on the work we've done this term?

What does Yeats *mean*?

I'm still bumping the ceiling, but ever so gently. I find this a pleasant prospect, looking down on you from here.

Oh, my lungs are filling with chalk, my bones are turning to chalk, one of these days two students will pick me up at either end and roll me into the chalktray. Now what were you asking, Miss Plenum?

You don't know what he *means* in that line, eh? Well, you see, there was this Yeats. Short fellow with a Vision—capitalize that. And *Yeats*, remember, requires an *s*, even though there was only one of him. Don't let me catch anyone putting the *s* before the *t*, will you? That's a good class. Yeats had three periods: Mundi, Wednesday, Friday.

I find this levitating comfortable. And I hope you are all following me. Is anyone not following?

I see a cynical look stealing over Mr. Fan's face. What's the trouble, Mr. Fan?

Yes, yes—what will you be expected to *know*? Ha ha—observe: bump bump bump. The elements of a poem. How, for instance, does imagery contribute to the effectiveness of—well,

fill in the blanks. And what about rhythm? Suppose you have one poem that goes along bumpety bump bump bump? And another that goes *ba-loom, ba-loom, ba-loom*? What about devices of sound? Suppose you have one poem that growls: *grrrrrrrruff!* And rhyme. Diction too. Do you all know what is meant by diction? Have you all seen that nice little book, I believe it's available at the Bookstore in a paperback edition for about a dollar, I understand that book defines these terms we've used and gives you excellent illustrations, and I would say to anyone who is still puzzled that he might do worse than invest a dollar (I believe it is), he'd probably find it well worth his time, money, and energy.

Oh, my dry bones are rising. Listen, I'll rattle them against the ceiling like dice. How does that simile contribute to the effectiveness of —

— Yes, Miss Plenum?

Still hunting for that thematic needle in the stylistic haystack, are you? You didn't get the point, eh? Ha ha. Watch, Miss Plenum — no hands.

I am now passing the equator, heading for a land where there are no men or beasts. I saw a hand go up back here. Was that your hand, Mr. Mill? You look worried.

Of course we're going to spend the entire hour this way!

Oh, I look down on a *tabula rasa*. And another. Hold still, while I write on them: rhythm, image, metaphor, simile, form, rhyme, reason. How clearly I see you now — some are fishing (for answers); some are plowing (or have been plowed); some are looking at the sky (I too look at the sky; the sun is bright on three pretty sweaters crossing the lawn to the Library; I cannot see one *tabula rasa*, but still they are pretty; some are going bump bump bump; and some *ba-loom, ba-loom*; I do not hear any of them going *grrr*; but I heard someone, probably coming from outside through the slightly opened window of spring, saying *rrrrruff*); and some are just scratching their innocent behinds. Treat that as a joke; I bet Miss Hendreck is going to tell her parents, aren't you, Miss Hendreck?

Still hunting for the needle, eh? How are we on time? We want to be sure you get your wordsworth. Bump, bump—bumpety bump bump bump.

My voice is drying up; see the lonely clouds of chalk. How many have seen the daffodils today? They're yellow. And how many saw the rhythm of the crocuses?

No hands? From here I see a circle of flowers and three girls on the grass near the Library.

I'm running out of gas. Does any of this mean anything to you?

Don't forget, will you, to write my name on the examination booklet—S-t-e-i-n—i before *e*, except after *t*. And—is that the bell?—it's been nice having you in class, I certainly hope you enjoyed it as much as—and best of luck in the examination—yes, I think a good movie or other form of relaxation, yes.

Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye. Do you remember in Breughel's *Icarus*—yes, Miss Plenum, I have too, and the very best of luck—goodbye, everyone . . . goodbye.

I am coming down, rapidly.

Bump.

● ALLEN J. KOPPENHAVER

TO MY FRESHMAN COMPOSITION STUDENTS

I who have seen the human predicament  
In two hundred and fifty words, more or less,  
Described,  
Turn in my red pencil.  
The steady march of civili. . .  
I am unnerved,  
Deveined, as it were, a headless  
Pink white shrimp of a mind.  
And I long for a word from the world,  
One moment meant by you and/or  
By me.

ALLEN J. KOPPENHAVER

### I'VE DECIDED TO BUILD A POEM

But my brother thinks I'm crazy.  
My next door neighbor who sells shoes says I need  
exercise and will I have a beer?  
My instructor says he can't give me credit for it because  
he lacks a common basis on which to give it a grade.  
The "little mags" have almost unanimously patternized  
themselves and I can't afford a subscription in  
order to find whom I should write like.  
The lady who cleans my room wonders what all these  
scribblings on my desk will amount to, and, though  
she doesn't say anything, the look she gives me fills  
me with despair.  
And now I wonder if, in all my numerous note books,  
diaries, class notes, letters to and from friends, re-  
lations, and literary people I know, there is a sub-  
ject worthy of an evening's concentrated effort.  
Is it worth all this?  
Perhaps I had better go down stairs, get a cup of coffee,  
and think this over carefully.

### ● GEORGE STARBUCK

#### TWO SONGS FROM A WRITER'S CONFERENCE

##### I.

##### *Song of the Second Lecturer in the Novel*

When I was Young and thirty  
I heard a wise man say  
"Your trousers are too dirty;  
Throw them all away.

"The better Younger Poets  
Are better-dressed than you."  
Now I am Young and forty  
And a father-figure too.

2.

*The Passionate Bread-Loafer's Farewell to His Lady Fellow*

If the grass in the Meadow is withered and sere  
 And the reeds in the Hollow are hollow,  
 It isn't the heat or some mystical drear  
 Premonition of winter to follow;  
 It's the wrappers, etcetera, whiskey and beer  
 Creative pursuits have deposited here;  
 So hold me and shed a mellifluous tear  
 (In fealty sweet to Apollo)  
 For fealties, frailties, fellowship dear—  
 Oh, shed me another; let's wallow.

The eyes of the Chairman are hollow as well,  
 The eyes of his protégée hollower.  
 The withery Poet-Professor's spell  
 Has withered his willowy follower.  
 But cling to me, baby, and what the hell:  
 If we're farther away from a Prix Nobel  
 And no more able to publish or sell  
 Than Emily D. or Apollo were,  
 There's hope at least in the parallel,  
 And life—dear life—in the wallower.

Then weep me a puddle of sweet regret;  
 The sands in the glass are lower.  
 The scotch in the larder is lower yet,  
 And none in the bottom drawer.  
 Console with me, baby, and never fret:  
 There's nothing we've promised we can't forget  
 When again we're accountant and usherette,  
 Alabaman and Idahoer,  
 And the letters, the teardrops to get them wet,  
 Come slower, and slower, and slower.

NEW LIGHT IN FRESHMAN ENGLISH

By WALKER GIBSON

Mr. James V. Bookbux  
Director, College Department  
Holt Winston Harcourt Knopf Random McGraw and Co.  
Madison Avenue  
New York, New York

Dear Jimmy:

I certainly appreciate your interest in my new freshman rhetoric. When your traveler Buzzy Donahue dropped in here at the U. yesterday and I told him about my project, he said I would hear from you about it, and it was kind of you to send along that contract. But in frankness I must add that the new merger of Oxford Macmillan Scribners Harper and Teen Comics have also expressed a lot of interest in this deal, and with the thought that you might like to see some actual manuscript, I am shooting along herewith a couple of pages from my Introduction.

The terms of your contract—the \$10,000 advance and 20% royalty for the first half million copies—are pretty fair, I suppose, but I think that after you have had a look at some of my actual work, you will be in a position to make a new offer. Frankly, I have reason to believe that OMSH and TC are prepared to do a little better, and when I send them these pages from the Introduction, I expect some real enthusiasm from them.

By the way, Jimmy, let me congratulate you on your own recent merger. It certainly is good to see you fellows in publishing getting together, and I have always said that if there's one thing that will bring us *all* together in this business of education, it's all of us pulling together to make a stack of cash.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH C. BUHLSCHITZ



INTRODUCTION FOR A NEW RHETORIC  
to be entitled  
THE COMPLETE FRESHMAN COURSE OF REALLY  
TRULY EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

You are a freshman, and taking Freshman English. Well now, this little book of 6843 pages is intended to help you master your difficulties in really truly effective communication. You do have difficulties, do you not? If you have no difficulties in communication and happen to write gracefully and well right now, you must study this little book carefully and a welcome change in your style will soon be evident.

Now let us consider first what *tools* the writer makes use of. First and foremost, he uses *words*. Doesn't he. *Words* might be called, in a manner of speaking, the *tools* that the writer uses. The *tools* that the writer works with, in other words, might truly be said to be, simply, *words*. Words, you see, are, from one point of view, what the writer writes with, much as a farmer uses a *shovel* to clean out his cow barn. (Your instructor will be glad to provide you with other examples.)

And now the question arises, what is a word? A word, or "word," is, in a way, and in a manner of speaking, a symbol, or *symbol*, or perhaps one might say, from another point of view, a "symbol." Now when you have grasped that essential fact (or basic concept) about words, you will be prepared to confront the fundamental problems of truly *effective* communication with words (or symbols).

But we must be very careful about generalizing here. All freshmen tend to generalize too quickly, and you must never forget that you are a freshman. So let us be cautious. *Some* words, so to speak, are *more* symbolic than other words, and until this essential concept (or "fact") is clearly grasped, the student will remain at a distinct disadvantage in this tricky business of really truly effective communication.

At this point in our analysis, you are perhaps asking, Just *what* words are more symbolic than other words? Let us take an example of a word. Let us take the word "write." Now the word "write" is very symbolic. As a matter of fact, and from at least one point of view (if not from others as well), the plain fact is that to *write* you have to have *words*. Now do you see how truly and essentially *symbolic* the word "write" really is?

We are now ready to consider our first *Rule* for Using Effective Communication Effectively. Study this rule carefully—don't let its initial difficulties "get you down"—and don't go ahead until you have mastered it thoroughly.

RULE 1

*As a general practice, use WORDS when writing and speaking.*

BUT

Note the many exceptions to this Rule, as outlined on pages 3452-3866 below, and in Chapters 4, 18, 59, and 77 passim.

ALSO

Suggestions for Further Study: Read all issues of *College English*, *American Speech*, etc., for the past eight years. Consult a good dictionary. Look up "dictionary" in a good encyclopedia. Look up "encyclopedia" in a good dictionary. Take notes. Write a Theme of approximately ten thousand words, entitled "Silence Is Golden."

We may take the above "rule," then, as our first precept for Using Effective Communication Effectively. But then we must add that really, from another standpoint, there are no "rules" as such—there are only, so to speak, policies, or observations on usage. This is a permissive age, as you have already discovered when they let you into college. So that although this book contains many many "rules," you must remember that they are actually not *rules*, except in the sense that if you don't memorize them and repeat them back word for word, you will probably fail. (Your instructor will be glad to explain this concept to you.) Inside the cover of this little book you will observe a list of 1437 "rules." Memorize all these "rules" carefully, keeping in mind at all times that they are not, exactly, *rules*. And whatever happens, never forget our first "rule": As a general practice, use WORDS when writing and speaking.

Now the question arises, what is a word?

● DEBORAH AUSTIN

ANOTHER DISTINGUISHED LECTURER, 8 P.M.

The chairs are plush, and even the tired posterior  
cannot be restless in such a soothing position.  
Besides, who among us would not willingly suffer  
for the sake of a little extra erudition?

All the serenity born of correct statistics  
glistens aloft on the pale precipitous brow.  
If, any time, he had felt any doubts, or any  
insecurity, he has forgotten now.

Gesticulating, the evening-coated arm  
rises a little, stiffly, and sinks again.  
The level voice, a little monotonous, fades  
momentarily, lost in a passing train.

Pauses are not for enlightenment; only breath.  
Why should he pause, behind whose shoulder there  
Plato, Aquinas, and Aristotle proffer  
footnotes, like bunches of flowers at a fair?

Clapping, we nod and murmur. His points were good.  
(Nothing demanded; nothing we have to Do.)  
Going home, we arrive at the pleasing realization  
that, left to ourselves, we might have made them too.

Under the bland, reversed wedding-cake of ceiling,  
smiling at colleagues, waiting for aisles to clear,  
not even secretly will we admit to ourselves  
what we had hoped to hear.

# DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN

(EDITOR, WAYNE BOOTH)

Chief Editor's Note: This is a season of startling new textbooks. On page 99 we print the illuminating introduction to *The Complete Freshman Course of Really Truly Effective Communication*, uncovered by Walker Gibson. Here we print a few pages of real live textbook text, sent in by our Department man Wayne Booth, whose second cousin wrote it. We have found this new text so useful and popular around our office that we have taken to saying to each other, "Get the weentsie book." Its name, however, is not *Weentsy* but *The Art of Sinking in Prose*. Booth, tiring, proposes to print excerpts from it for the next two or three issues and let it stand for his Department.

## THE ART OF SINKING IN PROSE

By PROFESSOR JOHN R. BUTHNOT, PH.D.

### INTRODUCTION

. . . The truly astonishing thing is that so far as the present writer can discover, which is pretty far, no one has ever attempted a Rhetoric of American before. In attempting one now, I am deeply, not to say profoundly, conscious of the risks taken by any pioneer. But I think I can say without fear of being contradicted that the primary orientation of American studies will receive a new image as a result of my spade-work.

### CHAPTER ONE

#### GOOD AMERICAN IS DEMOCRATIC AMERICAN

. . . [Five pages of the History of Democratic are elided here] Though it may seem radical to some, then, it is high time to recognize that it is undemocratic to do anything *too* well. We all know that the most *comfortable* pianist is the one who plays most like ourselves, *l'homme moyen clumsy*. And is not the friendliest tipist the one whoo tips ans spels like me? Well, then, I'm sure all you students will agree with me in extending this little principle to writing, and your teacher will too, for he or she is after all just another student, a little older perhaps, but still learning right along with you. No one knows very much in this world of ours, and it ill-behooves any of us to write as if he did. In fact, it is the writing *that reads most as if the author knew how to write* that offends all of us the *most*. We've all known the gnawing envy that

can be raised in us by a sentence beautifully turned. How much more skillful, how much more gracious, to please your reader, or readers, by making him or her feel that he or she could have done it better!

It was undoubtedly some such motive as this that motivated Prof. Leland B. Jacobs to adopt the sinking style as he exhorted the writer of children's books to employ "craftsmanship":

Mustering all the craft he possesses, he must so order, so balance, so proportion his writing that, stylistically, it is right in its form and feeling as well as in its life sources and its words.<sup>1</sup>

Now, then, can you see why this is real democratic skill? You or I or any number of democratic writers might have managed that sentence up to the last clause. We *might* have thought of the pyramidal redundancy of three "so" phrases and even the splendid confusion of "stylistically right in its form and feeling as well as in its life sources." But who of us, who even of us with years of writing experience, would have thought to add that final swoop, that final steep glide, "and its words?" Our writing must not only be stylistically right in its form and its feeling, not only in its life sources, but also *in its words*! This is democratic writing, writing which makes us envy its very capacity (oh, subtlety!) to forestall envy. And it is writing that leads us to our first, or is it our second, principle.

#### PRINCIPLE ONE. SLOVENLINESS IS SKILL

Whenever possible, avoid building your sentences into meaningful wholes. Honest, realistic thought is not organized, trimmed, prettified; it flows, dips and glides; it *sinks*, and the prose that reflects honest thought must sink with it.

There are of course innumerable ways to prevent one's writing from rising to an unnatural, artificial level. Some of these can be mastered only after years of experience. But some are within the average reach of average us.

##### I.1. *The Simple, Straightforward Mistake*

Ever since that great American poet, or poet of American, T. S. Eliot, set the world afire with the grammatical error with which he begins his great poem, "The Waste Land" (Let us go then, you and me?),<sup>2</sup> the world has known that truly *big* writing and speaking must contain many *little* errors. Does one wish to avoid the charge of traditionalism and pedantry while attacking the modern

linguists? — Mr. A. M. Tibbetts solves the problem simply and clearly, with a direct prepositional onslaught:

It is with the practice of writing that we must get ahead with anyhow, not with the lint-picking philosophical distinctions that the linguists are presenting us with . . .<sup>3</sup>

Or, does one need to establish rapport with a convocation of average students and teachers? — The President of the Board of Trustees of a university in Utah wins everyone with one stroke:

My daughter has never been able to have children because of the 4-H factor.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, you will be surprised at how much can be accomplished by simply slapping down whatever word first comes into your head, without bothering too much about its meaning. In writing about "masscult" and "midcult" in *Partisan Review*, for example, the author (Dwight MacDonald) ran a real danger of sounding condescending towards the masses and mids. But he saved himself by proving, at one stroke, that he is one of us:

There were two Byrons, the public swashbuckler of *The Corsair* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and the private mocker of the same romantic attitudes, and this split between the two was to become congenital.<sup>5</sup>

*Exercise for 1.1:* Write a sentence containing three creative solecisms and at least two errors of fact. Be careful to make the whole thing seem inadvertent. Note how quickly the skills you are developing become congenital.

### 1.2. *The Simple Anti-Climax*

When all is said and done, you can say and do more with the *structure* of your sentences, the very form in which they rise and fall, than with any amount of mere error-mongering. It is true, of course, that something is achieved even with a plain fragment, constructed at the right time and place. Mr. Shannon McCune, Provost of the University of Massachusetts, contributes a good deal to his attack on those who would waste time teaching skills by concluding with a splendid fragment:

Included in these skills fundamentals of mathematics, laboratory techniques in science, a foreign language, and the competent writing and speaking of English.<sup>6</sup>

But observe how much more forceful he becomes when, in sum-



marizing his own proposals concerning "The Imperative of Major Departures," he rises to a full anti-climax:

If every college and university in this country would tomorrow publicly announce that by 1964 (1) that [sic] they [sic] will not teach courses equivalent to those that are now called Freshman English and Speech, (2) that they will expect their students to be skilled in basic mathematics, (3) that they will insist that a student be proficient in the use of a foreign language, and (4) that they will expect a student to have experience in a laboratory science course, it would create chaos.<sup>6</sup>

Ah, my students, the swoop, the dive, the very dying fall of it!

*Exercise for Principle 1:* Rewrite the first page of any classic that particularly annoys you, to demonstrate how I.1 and I.2 may improve them. Be sure that your fragment index (ratio of completeds to incompletds) never falls below  $\frac{1}{4}$ .

## PRINCIPLE TWO: REPETITION IS ECONOMY

Assume that your readers cannot get a point if it is made only once. The Average Reader in the up-to-date world of today—a global world if we ever lived in one—is in a hurry. If he misses the point, he doesn't want to have to worry his way back over the passage to figure it out. GIVE IT TO HIM AGAIN, and he'll thank you for it.

### *Worst*

NO CLASSES WILL BE HELD SATURDAY, JULY 9, since both the written examinations for master's degrees and the graduate record examination are to be given then.

### *Medium*

Due to the scheduling of the written examinations for the master's degrees and the administration of the graduate record examination on Saturday, July 9, it is found to be not practical to attempt to hold classes on Saturday, July 9, 1960.

### *Best*

"Due to the scheduling of the written examinations for the master's degrees and due to the administration of the graduate record examination on Saturday, July 9, 1960, it is found to be not practical to attempt to hold classes on Saturday July 9, 1960. Because of this, all classes originally scheduled for Saturday, July 9, 1960, are cancelled."  
—Dean Mark W. Belzell, School of Education, State University of South Dakota.<sup>7</sup>

## THE CARLETON MISCELLANY

*Exercise for Principle Two:* Restate the beginning of the Gettysburg Address so that you get in, also, the phrases "87 years ago" and "only 13 years less than a century past." You may also repeat "four score and seven years ago" more than once if you wish.

### PRINCIPLE NO. 3: ALWAYS MAKE YOUR READER FEEL GOOD

There are many ways to make your reader feel good, but never forget that straightforward flattery is still as useful as it ever was. "You are already writing," a brochure from Antioch College, advertising their Writing and Publishing Seminar, tells me, and immediately I feel more productive than I've felt in months:

You are already writing, or trying very hard to do so, if you receive this notice [they absolutely refuse to *send* the notice to the slothful?]. You have sorted out your ideas [see BARE-FACED LYING, Chapter VII below]. You have exposed yourself to skills and techniques. You have discovered that writing is a hard won art. You have decided in which categories you would like to publish. . . .\*

*Exercise for Principle No. 3:* Write a brief reply to this brochure, flattering Antioch into giving you a scholarship to the Writing and Publishing Seminar.

### PRINCIPLE NO. 4: ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS IN IGNORANCE

No author was ever hurt by being ignorant of his subject matter. When in doubt, write on. Our British cousins are often better at this sort of thing than we; I have yet to meet an Englishman who felt that having nothing to say should lead a man to say nothing. Observe the construction of the following paragraph, by Mr. W. W. Winkworth. Mr. Winkworth has found himself—unexpectedly, one can only assume—writing on the subject of "Bronzes and the Minor Arts: Jades, Lacquer, Enamels, etc.," for a volume called *Chinese Art: An Introductory Handbook*. "I think this picture is signed Wen Chia, whose sixteenth-century uncle, Wen Ch'en Ming, was so famous," Mr. Winkworth tells us when the going gets rough. "To me it seems as good as a Cézanne, though nothing could be less like one." Having exhausted what he has to say about the painting, all of it carefully confined to what you or I or the next man might as easily have said, Mr. Winkworth suddenly sees

his path clearly. "But what is the use of looking at Chinese paintings unless you know something about European ones?" he goes on, without a blush. "Cézannes' water-colours are better than anything I have ever seen in Chinese art, except perhaps some paintings by Chu Ta reproduced in Japan." Noticing, no doubt, that this contradicts flatly what he has just said about Wen Chia's painting being as good as Cézanne's, he hurtles ahead:

Moreover, the Chinese are as keen on Cézanne as we are when we see good specimens. Professor Liu Hai-su, formerly Director of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Shanghai, was a good judge of such matters; he was himself a good painter in all styles, and wrote a book which was to appear in English. So has Mr. Chiang Yee. It is possible for such men to have some idea about whether Chinese pictures are good or bad, or by this or that artist.

I hope I have given the impression in these notes that, unlike many other writers on Chinese painting, I cannot even read Chinese; my opinions are usually quite valueless unless I have fortified myself by reference to someone else. My feelings about Chinese pictures, however, and my enjoyment of them, I hope gradually to refine. 'The heart I can use; the head I can borrow.'

Now I think that any careful student comes out of such a passage feeling that he too could be an art critic, and not only that but a critic of Chinese bronzes and other minor arts.

*Exercise for Principle 4:* Write a paragraph comparing the No plays of Japan with pre-Aeschylean tragedy. Study Helps: Mr. Gilbert Murry and men of his stamp can, or could, tell one play from another pretty well.

**SUMMARY and CONTROLLING IDEA:** The Democratic Writer will not impose unnatural coherence or clarity on his materials. His overall purpose will be to show that he is at least as safe as he is sound. In the words of the Marquis Publications blurb for *Who's Who* [note the difficulties in being genuinely democratic when advertising what for many is the Final Rung on the Ladder]:

The duty of Marquis Editors is an entirely impersonal one. It is to select, impartially and to the best of their abilities, those they consider fall under carefully established standards — tested during more than half a century — for reflecting comparative subjectivity to reference interest on meritorious scores. Once so

## THE ART OF SINKING

selected, the maintenance in print of an accurate, down-to-date, life record—to serve the indisputably important purposes just cited—must of *both* fairness and equity, depend principally on your responsibility.<sup>10</sup>

*Conclusory Exercise:* Contrast, using maximum responsibility, the role of fairness and of equity in deciding who's who.

(SUBSEQUENT CHAPTERS WILL BE PRINTED IN  
SUBSEQUENT ISSUES)

### Footnotes:

1. "Books for Beginning Readers: An Appraisal," *Education Today*, No. 23. The contributor asks us to withhold his name, preferring to be known as the only reader in the country who, for his own reasons,, reads both the *Miscellany* and *Education Today*.

2. Unfortunately there is no record of whether the Fisher King used good grammar or bad. But as somebody has said, a booboo should not mean but be.

3. *College English*, February, 1960. You don't really care about the page, do you? Or the name of the contributor?

4. The contributor is T. Y. Booth, and he just happens to be my second cousin. Send him \$2.00.

5. I found it myself, but why don't you send \$2.00 to Dwight MacDonald himself, as advertising?

6. "The College of the Sixties: The Imperative of Major Departures," delivered to Closing General Session of the Fifteenth National Conference on Higher Education, sponsored by the Association for Higher Education, Chicago, March 9, 1960. I wasn't there.

7. NOTICE TO SUMMER SESSION STAFF, on Bulletin Board, submitted by Daniel Arnaud. \$4.00.

8. What's *this* category? And can it be called publishing?

9. Leigh Gibby, \$5.00.

10. Howard Nemerov, perhaps the only reader of *Miscellany* who has traffic with *Who's Who*, sent this one (\$5.00). The A. N. Marquis Company now has the distinction of being the first source of American to appear twice. Hadn't we better do something to stop the flow? Can anybody explain why the Marquis letter from Wheeler Sammons, Jr. (See *Miscellany*, No. 1), and this one from Jackson Martindell, read as if written by the same hand?

# REVIEWS

## DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN SLANG,

*Compiled and Edited by*

HAROLD WENTWORTH, PH.D.

*and*

STUART BERG FLEXNER, M.A., Thomas Y. Crowell Company,

1960

A reviewer wanting to make profound clichés and large generalizations about this book will find most of them already expressed by its editors, who tell us that from a study of the matter contained in their dictionary we learn among other things that "language responds to new concepts and developments with new words," that it "reflects the kind of people who create and use it," that "most American slang is created and used by males," that "food is probably our most popular slang image," that many "words with primary standard meanings of food have sexual slang meanings," and that, further, our slang proves many of us see a close relation between sex and cheating. Should the reader doubt the last two statements, let him be directed to the appendices which list forty-five sex-cheating words and sixty-four sex-food words like the obvious "tart" and "tomato" and the less obvious or perhaps only less well known "barbecue" and "muffin."

It is well, however, that the editors have usually qualified their generalizations with words like "most" or "many" or "some," for one of the over-riding premises of the book, and indeed one of the facts of language which the book proves, is that slang is a group phenomenon, much of it of course cant and argot, and much of it made up of "counter-words" or the "automatic . . . responses of like or dislike [sic], of acceptance or rejection" which people utter in order to show they "belong" and are "somebody" or to express "group interests, memberships, and patriotisms." Clearly then, "American slang" can hardly be said to exist. Instead we have regional or college or circus or Army or jazz slang, and for a listener to know what a speaker means by a "counter-word" like "jerk" will require that he know something of the manners and ideas considered valuable and important by the group to which the speaker belongs. Although a philatelist might not call *anyone* a "weird," we

can be certain that any person he might condemn with this epithet would be quite different, intellectually and socially, from the person a hot-rodder would mark with the same label.

Consequently, an outsider listening to slang will find it as vague and fuzzy a means of expression as Orwell said the language of politics is, and find slang-users like Orwell's political speakers who "usually have a general emotional meaning—they dislike one thing and want to express solidarity with another—but . . . are not interested in the detail of what they are saying. . . ." with the result that "the word *fascism* has now no meaning except insofar as it signifies something not desirable." This outsider will find slang subject to the same law of reciprocal cause and effect that Orwell described when he said "language becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish" and "the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts."

But I think this dictionary proves slang an even more complicated phenomenon. Many users of slang speak obscurely not because their thinking is slovenly but because they are deliberately trying to keep their meaning hidden from all but a few chosen listeners, as did the nineteenth-century criminal with his rhyming slang in which a bottle was an "Aristotle" and a whore a "fifty-four" and as do children with their Pig Latin. Trouble comes, of course, when the concealment has been penetrated. Speakers of Pig Latin must learn or create new languages like "Ong" or "Pelf Latin." And when "twist" becomes an almost standard word for "girl" the old "twist and twirl" simply doesn't serve its original purpose any more. Of course the making of new words or languages is not easy, and I think this dictionary shows that speakers desiring secrecy have sometimes found an easier solution to their problem; they simply change the *meanings* of the old useless terms and thus give them a new life in ambiguity. As a result we have slang words which are not simply vague like "weird" but which can mean and have meant, specifically, as "graft" has, "a person's calling," "work," and "bribery."

These shifts in meaning in turn point to the existence of a third kind of vagueness which has its roots not in simple haziness of thought nor in the desire to conceal meaning with a kind of cypher but rather in a speaker's desire to mark himself as *apart* from a group, to be an insider among insiders, and indeed to criticize the customs and prejudices of a group to which he ostensibly belongs. The entries in this dictionary show that some speakers of slang think very much as did the young people whose behaviour Malcolm Cowley explained with his Theory of Convolutions in *Exile's Return*. "Full of beans," for instance, can mean either "mistaken"



or "high-spirited." It would seem that one tiring of high-spirited people would soon give "full of beans" the "mistaken" reading as an indication that he no longer considered high spirits either in good taste or an example of the new group attitudes. A similar shift is apparent in the uses to which "gas" is put; to "gas" is "to impress . . . as remarkable" and "to deceive or cheat," and a "gasser" is progressively "anything exceptional," "anything dull," and "anything uproariously funny," the word thus a brief history of a social and critical evolution. "Fracture" apparently developed in a like manner; at first it meant "to cause uproarious laughter," and then as attitudes toward comedy changed it came to mean "to cause someone to become sad, angry or disgusted," and finally turned vague and almost useless except as another "counter-word" meaning "to make a strong reaction."

I am perhaps carrying the "counter-word" argument further than the editors would like, but I feel that the manner in which the entries are made bears me out. In the first place, this dictionary is, according to the data printed on its jacket, "based on historical principles," and I have in my theorizing here quoted the various definitions in the order in which they are given. And in the second place, the editors tell us in their "Explanatory Notes" that when "original usage dates are not well established . . . the various meanings are listed in decreasing order of popularity . . ." Thus all entries, I argue, may very well be chronological; the smaller, less popular splinter groups, made up of the "First Convolution" and "Second Convolution" people, obviously come into being after the large groups.

Because of this "Convolution" phenomenon, scornful rebels, splinter groups, insiders who see themselves as outside or in opposition to the large groups, frequently choose as their "counter-words" those which not only express disapproval or approval but which unlike ordinary well-established words actually *conceal* meaning. And this of course makes it inevitable that the makers of a slang dictionary move toward definition only through many difficulties. In this book it is obvious, for instance, that the editors often had to fall back on slang in trying to define slang words, as they did in their "dilly" entry which they began with "Any person or thing remarkable in size, quality, appearance or the like," but, apparently aware that even "remarkable" can mean only "observable" and thus fail to convey the precisely obscure meaning of "dilly," concluded with "a honey, humdinger, beaut, or lulu."

This state of affairs makes the reviewer's job difficult also. I think that ideally a review of this book should be written as a joint effort by a group of group-members, by a gang of insiders each of whom

would have a specialist's knowledge not only of his own group but also of this new collective to which he would belong by virtue of his participation in the reviewing job. These people would of course find errors and shortcomings in the book. The literary man would regret that in the "fantods" entry no credit is given to or quotation made from the writings of Sherwood Anderson. The gambler would be at a loss to understand how "fade" could be defined without reference to the game of craps. The Maineite would be annoyed to see "fog-cutter" defined only as "a drink of liquor . . . *Archaic*," and not as a "large-billed close-fitting cap, somewhat like a baseball cap, worn by lobstermen." The Navy man would think it strange that the editors defined "collision mat" as "a waffle" or "a pancake" without explaining what a collision mat really is. And he would certainly find a "glaring oversight" in the definition of "deep six," which the editors say means "a grave" and is "associated with jive and jazz use, especially bop and cool use since 1946," apparently unaware that whenever sailors throw anything, a dead body or an old pair of shoes, over the side, they say they are "giving it the deep six," using an expression taken from the precisely contrived jargon of the man reporting to the bridge the soundings he is taking with a lead-line.

The naval life and language fare generally badly in this book, our naval expert would say. He would point at the "egregious error" in the defining of "conn" as "the command of a naval vessel" and the giving as evidence for this a quotation from *The New York Times* of May 15, 1952: "The Captain thereby assumed the 'conn'." He would argue that of course the quotation gives no clue as to the meaning of "conn," which in this context could as well be "pose" or "chair" as "command," and he would say that the editors obviously had not consulted one of the important books listed in their formidable bibliography, *Naval Customs, Traditions, and Usage*, in which Leland P. Lovette, the author, says "conn" is a "very old word used as early as 1520 in 'the present sense of directing the steering.'" Nor, our expert would say also, did the editors consult the OED, which defines the word as meaning "To direct the steering of a ship" and as "The action or post of conning a ship." In naval usage the word never means "command" and always refers to the subordinate responsibility of directing the movement of the ship by the giving of orders to helm and engine room. A commanding officer is always in command but he has the conn only when he formally announces on the bridge that he "assumes" it. This he may do as often as he wants or thinks advisable, but he assumes command only once.

This naval specialist would of course be very garrulous and tell

a story with which to illustrate his point and enliven his part of the review. In fact, even though the story did neither of these things he would tell it. He would recall entering Hampton Roads in the battleship *New Jersey*, he thinks, with Captain Patrick, he is quite sure, steaming through the same waters in which *Missouri*, yes *Missouri* he is sure, grounded on a mudbank and stuck, to the scandal of a nation which cried that people allowed to drive boats ought to know better and to the detriment finally of her commanding officer's career. The point of the story would be that Captain Patrick, arguing that young officers can be made fit for responsibility only by being given responsibility, turned the conn over to a Lieutenant Junior Grade who had never before taken *any* ship through this channel, pointed out to him that *Missouri*, yes it was *Missouri*, had grounded right over there, and then gone out on the after wing of the bridge, still having the command after having now exercised it in a manner fraught with danger, and there conversed in a relaxed manner with this naval specialist about dog-racing, the liquor laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and rhododendrons.

The dictionary's editors, I tell myself, would welcome such a review. Certainly in compiling their book they themselves consulted many specialists. They give credit in their bibliography to the work of many scholars in periodicals like *American Speech*, *California Folk Quarterly*, and *Word Study*, and they list Otto Jespersen three, Louise Pound five, and H. L. Mencken six times. Of our writers they depended most heavily upon Mickey Spillane, Damon Runyon, Max Shulman, Nelson Algren, H. Allen Smith, Budd Schulberg, J. D. Salinger, Sinclair Lewis, W. R. Burnett and Langston Hughes. Strangely they did not consult Ring Lardner, but do give credit to one 1951 *New Yorker* article by John Lardner. And they list Herman Wouk's *The City Boy* and ignore his *The Caine Mutiny*. I hesitate to say whether this is a criticism of Wouk's knowledge of naval speech or only one of the reasons for the annoyance felt by our hypothetical naval-specialist-reviewer.

Of all these writers I think (guess, estimate) on the basis of a not careful counting, J. D. Salinger is the most quoted. And among musicians those most frequently the sources of illustrative quotation are Louis Armstrong and Jelly Roll Morton. This dictionary indeed can be considered a most valuable gloss on Morton as recorded by Alan Lomax in *Mister Jelly Roll*.

But enough of specialists. The non-specialist, the browser, the ordinary reader can find more good things in this book than any single specialist put into it and many more than our board of specialists could find errors. This reader will be delighted with a book

which outlines the thinking of that vast company to whom "H" is not as it is to users of conventional dictionaries "The eighth letter of the English language" but "Heroin as used by addicts," with a book in which indeed only ten initial letters are defined and then never as letters but as symbols of some pretty esoteric stuff. He will learn even though he lives in Minnesota that at least one New York City disc jockey sees our culture as an expression of "creeping meatballism," that the opposite of Jim Crowism or "A strong psychological attraction to Negroes" is Crow Jimism, that Stephen Longstreet in *The Real Jazz Old and New* has recorded that "*Faust* is not a poem, it means ugly," and he will be pleased to learn that if he has difficulty in separating or finding uses for the six definitions of "far-out" he does not really need to use the word, which the editors point out has "mainly far-out use."

"Far-out" might be the note on which to end this review. The editors I think are sometimes pretty far-out, which is to say that in isolated instances they are "far removed from reality," but their book is nevertheless far-out, which is to say it is "satisfying; capable of arousing enthusiasm."

E. L.

PRIMAL VISION: SELECTED WRITINGS OF  
GEOTTFRIED BENN,

*edited by*

E. B. ASHTON

293 pages. New Directions. \$4.75.

Payola and conflict-of-interest being what they are these days, I had better admit right at the beginning that I was hired to perform some minor editorial services in connection with the manuscript of *Primal Vision*. Aside from other considerations, loyalty to my sometime employer may lead me to hope for the book's success. Anyone who wishes for this reason to discount what I have to say is invited to do so. The fact is, however, that I am in no way whatever responsible for the contents of the book, and am besides such a poor student of German that I cannot judge the details of the translations. But I saw the manuscript with Mr. Ashton's corrections entered by hand, and from this I conceived the greatest respect for his judgment and editorial skill; his selection from Benn's poems, essays, and longer pieces is just and illuminating, his supervision of the work of the translators has been touched, I think, with genius, and the translations he has done directly himself are perfect repre-

sentations of Benn's style, both verse and prose. This is by no means an easy style to reproduce. Benn himself, perhaps a little proudly, noted its "acuity." It is a tough style, clipped, witty, also fluid, very professional; at the same time ornate, metaphorical, crammed with exotic reference: it is the style, I should say, of an enormously gifted writer. Here is a page from the *Novel of the Phenotype*:

A world of contradictions—but, after all, the world has seen a lot: the coronation of boy-favorites, divine honors paid to a white horse, a mausoleum built to the memory of a goblet, a beautiful tree tricked out with jewelry—and now this dismemberment! However, our situation is not favorable. All one hears about life, about the mind, about art, from Plato to Leonardo to Nietzsche, is not crystal-clear, contains dodges—are we not publicly discussing non-objectiveness? Yes, indeed, we doubt the very substance that has given rise to these words, we doubt its experiences and forms of happiness, we doubt its method of presenting itself, we doubt its images. We have scarcely more than a few paces ahead of us on earth and little of what is earthly; everything is a tight fit now, everything must be very carefully weighed, we gaze pensively at the veined chalices of big flowers into which the butterflies of night sink in their rapture. Our realm is never larger than a page, no wider than a painted hat with a feather in it, or a fugue—and beyond is billowing chaos. It is March, there is a touch of the insalubrious about this park; even in this plain, in this depression, the irises look tense, open too suddenly, yesterday mere buds, they burst out in a sort of self-defloration, in a blue leaping towards the light, young and hard like swordblades—and beside them more weapons: bell-buds, catkins swollen to bursting-point, certain and smooth-formed right to their purple or bee-brown rim—weapons of a hostile power, a superior force shattering all resistance—Nature herself. Faced with this, one has to summon up all one's strength.

Gottfried Benn was born in 1886 and died in 1956. He was a physician who spent much of his professional life in the medical corps of the German army. In his own country his reputation as a writer, in degree and in quality, somewhat resembled Eliot's or Valéry's in theirs. I don't mean that he was fully as prominent as either, though before his death he was certainly regarded as the grand figure of the modern literary revolution in Germany, the dean of the Expressionists. The reasons for his neglect so far in the United States—before *Primal Vision* translations had appeared here in only two or three out-of-the-way magazines, and American critics had paid him virtually no attention—are twofold: first, much of



his best poetry is untranslatable; second, his association with the Nazi movement in Germany alienated him from readers on the Allied side.

I am going to skip over the question of Benn's Naziism, but not because it is in any sense unimportant. On the contrary, it is very close to the whole problem of Benn's place in modern art and thought. But it is also an exceedingly complex question which cannot be discussed properly in a review. Let it suffice to say simply that Benn was not a party member, that he was in the party's favor for only a few months at the beginning of the Nazi regime, that he and his works were suppressed for years as he was shunted among minor military posts, that it is very difficult to tell from his published expressions to what extent he committed himself personally to the particulars of the party dogma, but that, on the other hand, he did definitely acquiesce in and publicly support the party program in 1933. His doing so seems to have been less a function of any political rationale than of a profound nihilism, his "doubt [of] the very substance that gives rise to these words," and this then becomes the crux of the matter.

When I sat down to reread *Primal Vision* before writing this review, I had just finished reading *Also Sprach Zarathustra* in the translation by Walter Kaufmann. The bearing of the one upon the other would be obvious even if for Benn the prime example of the culture hero were not Nietzsche, whose final dementia is brought forward in nearly every work as the exemplary specimen of modern despair. (According to Dr. Kaufmann, it was merely paresis.) Benn is the echo that rings—a little distantly—through the collapsed ruins of Nietzsche. The philosopher's anti-theistic braggadocio becomes in the poet a defiantly morose refusal to believe in anything. With all metaphysics shot to pieces, nothing objectifiable remained, the universe evaporated, mentality was reduced to the refuge of expression. "Singing," wrote Benn, "—that means forming sentences, finding expressions, being an artist, doing cold, solitary work, turning to no one, apostrophizing no congregation, but before every abyss simply testing the echoing quality of the rock-faces, their resonances, their tone, their coloratura effects. This was a decisive finale. After all: artistics! It could no longer be concealed from the public that here was a deep degeneration of substance. On the other hand, this lent great weight to the new art: what was here undertaken in artistic terms was the transference of things into a new reality proved by the laws of proportion, to be experienced as the expression of a new spiritual way of coming to terms with existence, exciting in the creative tension of its pursuit of a style derived from



awareness of inner destiny. Art as a means of producing reality: this was the productive principle of the new art."

Frankly, I have to exert myself forcibly to remember that there was a time when such statements seemed fresh and clear and exciting, clean blades with which to strike down the pussyfoots and sanctimonious punks. Now I am more likely to be filled with nausea. On the one hand, a "deep degeneration of substance"; on the other, Ethiopia, Spain, the gas chambers, the torture rooms. Suffering went on in spite of the "new reality." Went on and on, in fact, terror and rapine and destruction in onslaughts as unending as newsprint—until the very last one of us, beyond all playacting and romanticizing, recognizes his own truly damaged soul. What is left but to be sensible? We begin to confess at last that we have gone backward, not forward; into the old reality, not the new; backward to an existential origin in the lowliest domain of experienced fact. Poetry's misfortune is that it has not gone with us.

For what has happened to the art itself, aside from everything else? The force that was for a moment the great liberator of poetry, the formal revolution, became in two decades, three at the most, merely the atomizer, the etherealizer, and poetry evaporated in a mist of unimportance. Even the novel has been emptied, and stands now, if it stands at all, like the hollow trunk of a once green tree. Benn's "world of expression," in which he tried so brilliantly to live, is in plain terms the cult of form after all. We have seen it in action elsewhere, under prettier and perhaps less accurate names—Eliot's classicism, Pound's professionalism, Jolas's revolution of the word, etc. Even Dr. Williams and the Objectivists, by reacting violently in the opposite—or is it the same?—direction and trying to disinfect poetry of ideas, i.e. to dehumanize it, have arrived at somewhat the same predicament. In short, I am impressed by the way in which Benn seems to embody the logical extension of our whole movement from Baudelaire through the *Symbolistes* to the great post-Nietzschean figures: into the conflagration which Nietzsche kindled from the splinters of western thought the artist cast too the last fragments of his human semblance, and though it made a brilliant and many-formed blaze for a while, in the end the artist emerged with his art burned out and with his profound distrust of meaning turned into the ultimate failure of life—nihilism.

Benn is the epitome, the paragon; he is the type of your symbolical-metaphysical-expressionist-modernist flower brought to its finest blush and perfect foliation. For this reason every writer in America should read his book (not to speak of the pleasure of encountering a great stylist). But what I want to show above all is how this book, *Primal Vision*, exists and of course must exist in

time, thus defeating itself: the old reality, the "abyss" of experience, has kept opening itself out while the testament of perfect form has receded in its brittle splendor. We are beyond Benn now, and perhaps we must go behind him too, seeking the origins afresh; and incidentally we must decide quite soon whether or not Benn is a classic, to say nothing of the other grand figures. Perhaps it is a small kind of a revolution I am suggesting, very modest, quiet, shy, a little business-like, without manifestoes—the revolution of experience; for this is the only means by which poetry may be revitalized now. Substance is all—at least for us, at least for the time being. And to whom shall I address myself? Not to the young, for they are too much impressed by Benn's achievement, that brilliant architecture of denial and despair. Instead I speak to the middle-aged poets of my own generation, those who have got fifteen or twenty years of word-wrestling under their belts. What fitter champions in the revolution of experience? And the crucial question we must ask ourselves, fellow revolutionaries, is this: how much of our own reality—our adult experience of the world, unconfined by the stereotypes of another era—have we actually put down on paper?

HAYDEN CARRUTH

THE THEORY OF THE NOVEL IN ENGLAND,  
1850-1870,

by RICHARD STANG  
The Columbia University Press, 1959

The high Victorian age with which Mr. Stang deals here enunciated the theory of evolution, but as everyone is now aware *The Origin of Species* was only one step in a series which sufficiently proved that theory as applicable to ideas as to organisms. Stang's book undertakes to show that the critical concepts we apply to novels were neither products of Special Creation nor exotics from across the Channel. Just as there were great men living before Agamemnon, so there were great novelists before Flaubert and James, and some of them were English. The book shows that they did not operate solely on Astrophel's principle of "look in thy heart and write."

By reference to review articles in periodicals and to letters and journals of novelists, Stang discloses a lively and widespread awareness of such technical considerations as the relation of an author to his story, the interrelation of plot and character, and other elements of form and structure. It is true that the novel as a work of art had

to battle to outgrow its moral and intellectual swaddling clothes because of a persistent popular feeling that novels ought by definition to be light, pleasant entertainments, entirely "safe" for the pre-nubile sensibilities of Victorian young ladies. To help enforce the view, Mudie's Lending Library was Mrs. Grundy armed with real financial power. The book touches very briefly on some of the special kinds of morbid prurience spawned by the false morality, which will remind a modern reader of Hollywood's way of disinfecting orgies by putting them in Biblical frameworks. In the face of all this, however, good writers and critics alike were at work clarifying the nature of the novel and preparing it morally and aesthetically for its role as the major genre of modern literature. It was George Eliot, in the *Westminster Review* for July 1855, who anticipated Henry James's "sacred office" phrase with "the sacredness of the writer's art." This has the potential of stuffiness or attitudinizing: one must set it beside a passage from one of her 1873 letters: "Don't you agree with me that much superfluous stuff is written . . . about purpose in art? A nasty mind makes nasty art. . . ." She is unwilling either to oversimplify or oversubtilize; the novel is art, though not for its own sake, and makes serious demands on a writer. The book also quotes Dickens, preaching the "discipline" of the novelist's art in an 1857 letter to Emily Jolly, an enthusiastic Astro-phelian who had been recording her cardiac impressions a bit loosely.

The novel was a new form (relatively) in the period covered by Stang's book, but its best Victorian practitioners and critics had a sound sense of its relation to older forms and were able to adapt—among other things—concepts of poetry from Coleridge (who looked askance at novels but enjoyed Mrs. Radcliffe) and Shelley (who wrote two of the worst pot-boilers ever printed) and bring them to bear on the new domain. The results have proved much more viable than Fielding's "comic epic in prose" and still constitute our basic approach to the novel.

Among other things, Stang's book is a good study in the hardy perennial quality of the cliché. He cites John Stuart Mill's rote delivery of the judgment that the novel could never deal with the "inner man," at a time when Richardson, Sterne, and Goethe were all in general currency. Another notable cliché, that neither writers nor critics in England took the novel very seriously before 1880, will probably survive, but this book shows it to be a mastodon at large in the twentieth century.

ELVAN KINTNER

## FIG LEAF: THE BUSINESS OF BEING IN FASHION

By EVE MERRIAM

J. B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia and New York, 1960. \$4.95.

More often than he would care to admit, a reviewer's reactions to a book are determined by the circumstances in which he read the book, and these circumstances include the book he finished just before the one he has been asked to review. For example, if he had just returned from Disneyland where he had been reading over his favorite chapters in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* while the children enjoyed themselves and then was asked to consider the significance of Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*, no one would be surprised by the results. It can become more complicated. Let us suppose the reviewer has just been teaching Aristotle's *Rhetoric* during a summer session where he and the students have analyzed the arguments and emotional appeals of the speeches at the Democratic and Republican conventions and then is asked to consider the significance of Miss Eve Merriam's *Figleaf: The Business of Being in Fashion*. What then?

Fashion, Miss Merriam reminds us, is a 22 billion dollar a year business, thus ranking "below only steel and groceries among national industries;" the continued prosperity of the fashion industry depends upon persuading the consumer to buy more than he (or, more usually, she) actually needs; the heart of the fashion industry is, therefore, rhetoric in its all too pristine vigor. This we all knew, in a vague sort of way, but we hadn't really applied our wits to how it works and what it means. Miss Merriam has, and her book reminds us that it is every citizen's (and consumer's) duty to be able to recognize and combat demagoguery (or femagoguery), the systematic exploitation of political (or feminine) discontent.

It isn't American womanhood's fault they are discontented; the priests and priestesses of High Fashion have spent millions of dollars to make them so. "The stereotypes of women as emotional, irrational, impulsive are played upon and played upon," and — finally — believed. How can such misguided and confused creatures be saved? "In fashion there is faith," Miss Merriam shrewdly observes, a faith that has its own homiletic rhetoric. Her analysis is superb. *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue*, she notes, employ a language that is "hortatory, a summons, a vision of sainthood that brooks no equivocation. You have been called. Would you keep the Lord waiting?" It is the language of the chosen few. *Glamour* and *Mademoiselle*, apparently addressed to a lower church audience, speak a language that "is authoritative, but tempered with an egalitarian air. They suggest, they cajole, they implore — they make you eager to follow obediently be-

cause they are such good sports themselves." (Unfortunately Miss Merriam does not describe the rhetoric of *Town and Country*, a magazine, we non-subscribers learn, read by an audience whose "average reader's income is estimated at \$40,000 a year.") The aim of the rhetoric of both the elect and the good sports is the same: to establish beyond the possibility of rational doubt the idea that "being in fashion" is identical with "being a woman." Not in fashion, not a woman; the fashion changes as fast as the profit margin dictates, so then does the problem of being a woman. Thus, Miss Merriam concludes, "the number-one neurosis among American women in the middle- and higher-income brackets is the fear of losing their femininity."

It may be a new, and very profitable, neurosis, but it's an old rhetorical trick. As Aristotle noted in those long ago days when all fashionable women spoke classical Greek, such rhetoric is a double appeal to a woman's sense of shame (of not being in fashion) and to her fear (of not being feminine). What makes such rhetoric diabolical today is that it is disguised as instructions for her salvation.

Miss Merriam, of course, does not approve of all this, although she is admittedly fascinated by its brazen cleverness and success. Her suggestions for reform in her final chapter (which include an invocation to *Moby Dick*) strike a male reader as half-hearted. Would it not be better to arm ourselves with Aristotle's dictum that "fear sets us thinking what can be done," and his reminder that "we do not feel shame before persons for whose accuracy of judgment we entertain a great contempt?" The required course in college rhetoric may be our only salvation. It may enable American women to be women by being, not in fashion, but themselves. But to be themselves they apparently must spend every waking hour in analysis of the rhetoric of *Vogue* and *Glamour*, the cunning of the fashion photographer and the verbal dexterity of the copy-writers.

Freshman rhetoric is, admittedly, no more effective a panacea than reading *Moby Dick*—if the situation, already critical, is to be left in the hands of women alone. There is, however, a real hope, if only men will take the time to read *Figleaf* and if women will study their freshman rhetoric and cultivate their sense of the ridiculous. But for *Figleaf* to be used to the best advantage it must be read in precisely the right circumstances, as I quite accidentally discovered when I read it myself. An autumn evening, a tastefully subdued fire, the children so long in bed that our thoughts of them are untainted with any smoldering hatred, your wife in the second-best chair, resting after her long day's struggle with the young, now idly sewing buttons, planning menus, wondering if the two-year-old has an infected ear again, quietly listening to the Hi Fi as she idly



turns the pages of the *Rhetoric*, discarded copies of *Harpers Bazaar* and *Mademoiselle* resting under her scuffed-off sneakers—meanwhile you deep in the first-best chair and *Figleaf*, disturbing her reveries from time to time by reading aloud from Miss Merriam's book such tidbits as have not been brought together in one work since the Wife of Bath hurled her scholar husband's "book of wikked wyves" into the fire.

OWEN JENKINS

## PROFILES IN COURAGE

By JOHN F. KENNEDY  
Harpers, 1956

A few strictly non-political political notes in this festive election season.

Senator Kennedy's Pulitzer-Prize volume is one of the many books that a critic of the Pulitzer people would list as evidence of their disposition to play it safe. He would perhaps express himself as follows: "Kennedy's thesis—that moral courage is a good thing, even among Senators—would not be disputed by Republican, Socialist or Martian. The various biographies in it are narrowly conceived, with the thesis guiding each of their destinies. Incipient eggheadism lurks in the pretentious bibliography in the back, but the bibliography is happily not sustained by so much as one footnote. Here we have just one more instance of Pulitzerian fondness for the unexceptional, the mediocre, the popular—an instance the more shocking because the author's name and reputation would seem to have guided the judges more than his work."

OR the book might be used by an ordinary Republican or dissident Democrat to launch an attack on the good Senator himself, thus: "Senator Kennedy has brought to our attention many instances of courageous actions on the part of Senators who have placed conscience before popularity, principle before the approval of constituents. It remains to be seen, however, whether or not Senator Kennedy will practice what he preaches. Up to this point in his career he. . . ."

OR the book might be criticized by a sour historical scholar for "looking remarkably like a book Kennedy didn't even write. What," he would go on acidly, "was the role of Kennedy's 'research associate,' Theodore Sorenson? The book is popular history; it is not notable for its research; it does not aspire to give us new insights, new historical evidence about the celebrities in question. It depends mostly upon secondary sources, with occasional references to already collated and published letters and journals. Surely a 'research



associate' can have only a minor role in such an enterprise unless his role has to do with more than research. But what would that extra something be? Kennedy's preface describes Sorenson's assistance as 'invaluable . . . in the assembly and preparation of the material upon which this book is based.' Well, now, if the 'assembly' involved merely hauling the books from the library, and if the 'preparation' involved merely typing up passages selected by Kennedy for inclusion in the manuscript, then the difficulty vanishes. But it is hard to believe that a man of Sorenson's apparent talents was thus employed, especially since two typists are also thanked in the preface for their labors. Was Sorenson then responsible for a good deal more? If so, should he not have been acknowledged to be the co-author of the volume?"

OR, finally, the book might serve an intellectual anti-Organization Man discussing, as he would put it, "the prime political issues of our time: the relationship between the state's and the individual's welfare, or between the rights of man and the needs of Society. It is at this level that *Profiles in Courage* is a very thin book. With almost no apologies or qualifications Kennedy persistently identifies courage with a man's capacity to stand up for his country rather than his private interests; he identifies conscience with a sense of national duty, principles with patriotism, as if ultimately conscience could have no other proper allegiances, could not for example speak out *against* country on some dark occasion and be thought courageous. To those of us who fear the forces of collectivism around us as much as we fear those abroad, and who watched with a sense of desperation the repressive forces of group action at both the Democratic and Republican conventions this year, Kennedy's book offers no solace. It is the book of an Organization Man supreme, despite its reiterative plea for individualism."

But these, as I say, are strictly non-political political notes. I am none of the speakers above. I offer their comments without charge to any Kennedy foe who happens upon them before November 7, but as for myself I don't propose to use them. Why? I carry in my mind's eye the image of what Kennedy's chief opponent would have written had *he* thought of going after a Pulitzer.

R. W.

## Myth and Combat

### PYTHON

By JOSEPH FONTENROSE

University of California Press. 616 pp. Illustrated. \$10.

Professor Fontenrose's book is a vast and formidably learned account of the foundation myth of the Delphic oracle, Apollo's combat with the great serpent Python. In it the author masterfully shows, on rising levels of generalization, that this myth is one form of the widespread Greek dragon-combat story, that that story in turn is one form of the omnipresent Greek pattern of battle with a representative of the chthonic forces, and that that pattern in turn is one form of a worldwide creation myth of the gods' battle with chaos to create or win back the world's life and order. Fontenrose demonstrates this by an elaborate analysis of themes and motifs, including detailed tables of correspondence. The book begins boldly with a Manichaean revelation: "Every god has his enemy, whom he must vanquish and destroy," and it ends with the same dualism, now translated into Freudian revelation:

So we may look upon the whole combat in all its forms as the conflict between Eros and Thanatos. It is that opposition between life instincts and death instincts that Freud was the first to formulate, albeit tentatively, as the central principle of all living organisms from the beginning; though it was seen dimly and expressed in dramatic or metaphysical terms by poets and philosophers before him. But in life the two kinds of instincts, though opposed, are always mingled. Thus do the fantasies of myth disguise the fundamental truths of the human spirit.

Innumerable myths and their characters in Fontenrose's hands readily become one, but that one is an archetypal one. The pattern of the combat myth, Fontenrose concedes in an appendix, "is not found everywhere in the world," but he has earlier made it clear that it is found *almost* everywhere in the world, and behind some unlikely disguises. If it underlies Hesiod's cosmogony, it also underlies "Jack and the Beanstalk." If Genesis I conceals in *tehom*, the deep, Jahweh's battle with the Mesopotamian dragon Tiamat, out of whom he creates the world, the same combat is reported less momentously in the story of Judith and Holofernes. Jesus Christ, who won back Adam's immortality from the Old Serpent, is never mentioned in *Python*, but any reader can take the hint. Fontenrose notes wryly that the ancient Hebrews, and thus presumably the Christians, "shaped the myth in accordance with newer religious ideas." He is concerned not only with the unchanging dramatic essence of the story, but with the sort of changes its structure undergoes in time, mutations and transformations analogous to those Freud finds in

the dream-work. Since all the antagonists are eventually recognizable as Death, the myth's function is ultimately life-giving, like ancient fertility rite: to make the crops of the spirit grow, to strengthen and encourage. Fontenrose makes a striking contemporary analogy in a footnote:

The dragon's tyranny by no means contradicts his desire for chaos and inactivity. His modern counterpart is Hitler, who made use of disorderly elements in the community, and appealed to the antisocial impulses of everyone, so as to overthrow the existing order and win power; then, once he had won it, though he allowed his subjects scope for violence against whatever was left of the old order, he established his own kind of order wherever he held sway, a very rigid order that strictly limited action of all kinds, an order of inactivity and death, should the whole world be won.

What then is wrong with this fine, even brilliant book? In a sentence, Fontenrose knows everything about myth except what it is. His book is subtitled "A Study of Delphic Myth and Its Origins," but on origins he is woefully inadequate. *Python's* definition of myth is excellent: "a traditional story that accompanies rituals," reserving "legend" or "folktale" for traditional stories that do not accompany rituals. Fontenrose does not, however, see myths as originating in rituals, but as somehow attaching to them. Here is his origin theory:

It is more likely that a myth, invented in one place, was diffused over a wide area; having been attached at some point to fertility and agricultural rituals, it became the interpreting myth of such rituals wherever it was adopted.

Fontenrose hedges that his origin Theory "does not hold for every myth in its relations to rituals," but he would clearly like it to. In his view, myths are "invented." Here is the process: "I would suggest that man's first narratives were accounts of striking events of the immediate past: extraordinary perils and adventures during hunts, migrations, explorations, encounters with strangers." Thus the unicorn "probably has its origin in the rhinoceros," an Indian monster with two enormous arms "is clearly modelled upon the octopus," and so forth. "No doubt," he concludes, "that combat theme was suggested by actual struggles that men, as herdsmen or as hunters, had with ferocious beasts and dreadful reptiles and sea creatures."

In short, myths are distorted trivial history, as old Euhemerus argued when he found the origin of Herakles and the Golden Apples of Hesperides in a thief stealing oranges. Fontenrose explains:

Such combats surely became subjects of conversation long after the event. Then what was at first true narrative passed after a time into the people's store of legend and folktale, receiving increments of the marvelous and supernatural in the process.

If they are not inflated animal encounters, myths are distorted cult history, symbolically representing the conflict of one religion or ethnic group with another, or real wars "about which legends began to cluster soon after the event." We are asked to believe that after someone tells a story about a funny thing that happened to him on his way to the campfire that day, and someone else marvels it up a bit, it diffuses widely, and people all over the world recite it on their holy days as their most sacred truth about their gods. Finally, the myth, when it gets to the many peoples of the earth, is used as a key to explain rites that have mysteriously and independently evolved without any previous story or logic, and it fits them.

The trouble with all of this is not only that it is extraordinarily unlikely, but that we have known better for a long time. In the last century, William Robertson Smith and Sir James Frazer proposed that myths arise to explain and sanction rituals. In this century, Jane Harrison, Gilbert Murray, F. M. Cornford, and their followers rephrased that relationship, seeing myth not as a verbalization made up to explain a rite, but as a spoken correlative that evolves organically out of the acted rite, like a child's patter as he plays. Fontenrose knows the work of these scholars, respects it, and uses it in *Python*, but he discards their central conception for a jumble of the earlier unsatisfactory theories that their work outmoded. More than that, the dynamic of Fontenrose's position forces him to deny the great Darwinian principle that Sir E. B. Tylor taught the world almost a century ago, that the evolution of completed culture traits is always away from serious usage, never toward it. Thus the hunter's bow becomes the child's toy, the medicine man's rainmaker the baby's rattle, the sacrificial stake the maypole, the sacred narrative the fairy tale; never the reverse. Fontenrose writes:

It follows from what I have said that I do not consider myths to be the oldest kind of story to appear among mankind. For if we restrict the term myth to stories that are associated with cults as *aitia*, and if most of the myth plots are drawn from a people's folktales or legends, then we must suppose that folktales and legends are older kinds of narrative. In any case it is hard to believe that no man ever thought of telling a story until somebody felt the need of providing a precedent for rituals, or until rituals had suggested a narrative sequence.

Fontenrose devotes a good deal of effort to showing that in three selected rituals—the Babylonian New Year, the Greek Septerion,

and the Egyptian succession — “we do not have an enactment of the myth or anything like it,” and that the “true relation” between the two is not one of organic unity but “that exegetes had recourse to the events of myth in order to interpret the rites.” This is not the place to argue the technical points of correspondence, but one should note: (1) that Fontenrose’s accounts are fragmentary and late, in the Greek case as late as Plutarch and Aelian, that is, Roman Imperial times; (2) that he is deliberately not using the same ingenuity for harmonizing that earlier enabled him to transform anyone into dragon or dragon-slayer, so that even a little mythic orphan girl who hanged herself as result of mistreatment becomes the Great Beast; and (3) that he is proudly enrolled under Henri Frankfort’s obscurantist banner, in a crusade to undo the last seventy years of generalization in comparative mythology by the denial of the ancient Near East as a unified culture area.

Is any of this of the slightest importance, apart from the quibbles of scholars? I think an important principle is involved. Fontenrose writes:

It is simpler to suppose that a well-known type of story was introduced in many places to serve as the primeval precedent of the rituals than to believe in so many places the rituals spontaneously generated a uniform pattern of myth.

“It is more likely,” “it is hard to believe,” “it is simpler to suppose.” It is *not* easier to suppose or believe Fontenrose’s theoretical contentions, and if it were, that would still not make them valid. When Fontenrose writes eloquently about “the cosmic meanings of the combat myth,” he gives his show away; cultures do not embody their deepest and most profound truths in someone’s anecdote of a whirl with an octopus or a narrow escape from a bandit. If myths originate as Fontenrose thinks they do, they are a pack of trivial lies, and can never be anything but that. If they arise out of ritual, they are an expression of deepest human needs, of leaping for crops and flocks and goodly themis, and have a profound sociological and psychological truth, whatever the literal unreality of their stories. For all his numbered points and tables, Fontenrose cannot draw out Leviathan with a hook.

— STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN



# THE CARLETON MISCELLANY

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" . . . in my six years at Fortune . . . I was active on a literary magazine . . . which had a circulation of about 600. Thinking Luce would be pleased . . . I sent him an issue of *The Miscellany*, as it was dismally called. His reaction was that I had betrayed Time, Inc."

—Dwight Macdonald in *Partisan Review*,  
Spring, 1960

"The selections are extremely good, the gossip and reviews of weekly events, piquant and interesting; and the *Miscellany* is decidedly the *cheapest* Magazine published."

—from an advt. for the *North American  
Miscellany*, April 26, 1851

